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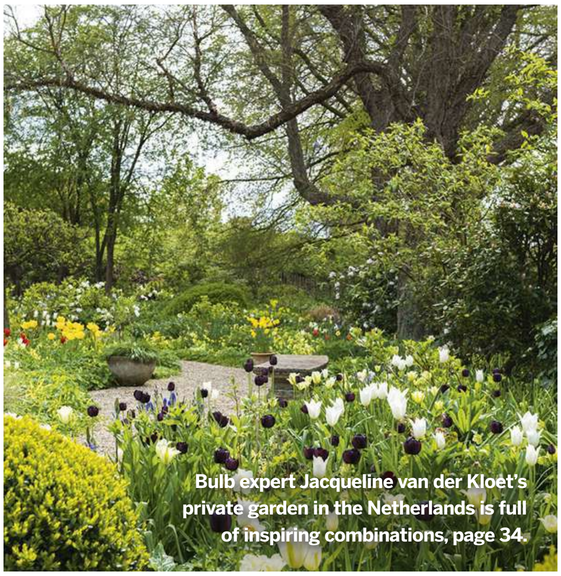
editor's letter

I'm writing this while sitting on the bullet train travelling from Tokyo to Kyoto in Japan. On my first visit to this fascinating country, just over two years ago, I was fortunate enough to visit the Tokachi Millennium Forest gardens created by designer Dan Pearson in Hokkaido [issue 145, page 28]. Dan and Midori Shintani, head gardener at the Millennium Forest, kindly took me to visit a private woodland garden created over the past 22 years by its owner, Mr Izumi. Sitting on *tatami* mats in one of the exquisitely built look-outs, perched amid the trees, we contemplated the scene around us; the dappled light enhancing the masses of beautiful plants on the forest floor. It was quite magical, and I am delighted that Dan shares his insights into this inspirational garden on page 72. Not many of us have the good fortune to own a small forest and as I'm always keen that the magazine offers ideas for whatever size garden you happen to have, on page 50 you'll find three great plans for modest-sized front gardens by designer Adele Ford. To inspire your spring plantings, we visit the garden of Dutch designer Jacqueline van der Kloet, a leading expert on bulbs who has worked on numerous international projects, including the High Line in New York. Learning how people garden in different parts of the world is endlessly fascinating. As part of my Japan trip, I'll be visiting gardens in Kyoto and Osaka, but in the meantime, I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet



Bulb expert Jacqueline van der Kloet's private garden in the Netherlands is full of inspiring combinations, page 34.

The garden at Tashiro's Forest in Hokkaido celebrates the beauty of native woodland plantings, page 72.

GARDENS
ILLUSTRATED
What to plant for
STYLISH SPRING DISPLAYS
Front gardens

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MAAYKE DE RIDDER, SHOGO OIZUMI

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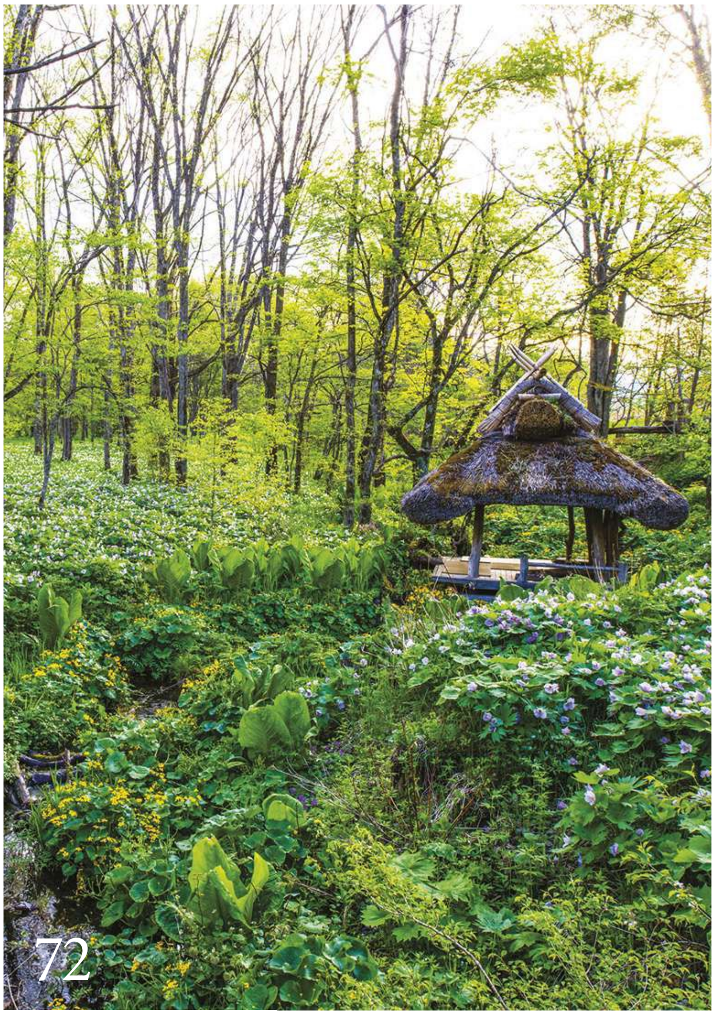
APRIL 2016



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COVER IMAGE
Spring display of tulips, including *Tulipa* 'Paul Scherer' and *Tulipa* 'Marilyn'. Photograph by **Britt Willoughby Dyer**

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SHOGO OIZUMI, MAAYKE DE RIDDER

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MARCUS HARPUR, RITA COATES / GARDENWORLD IMAGES

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- Save money when you **subscribe to the digital edition** – see page 32
- Get your spring planting started with **our Reader offers** from Chiltern Seeds and Beth Chatto Gardens – page 112

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Grower of the year Awards 2011 Winner Grower of the year Ornamental
Grower of the year Awards 2015 Winner Grower of the year Ornamental

contributors

MARCUS HARPUR

Marcus has found that the thrill of capturing gardens with a camera is the same as growing plants from seed, year on year. He is currently working on a book about East Anglian gardens. You can see his photographs of riverside garden, Langton Farm on page 44.

"Gardens, like the one at Langton, seem serene in the face of flooding. There's nothing like a new project to help you move on."

ADELE FORD

Adele is an award-winning garden designer who trained at the University of Greenwich and Hadlow College. She has a variety of projects on her books from small courtyards to large country estates. She shares her passion for planting with three front garden designs on page 50.

"What a great opportunity to encourage people to have a front garden and not a parking spot – no matter how small the space."

SHOGO OIZUMI

Shogo is a garden and lifestyle photographer based in Tokyo. He especially loves the gardens on Hokkaido Island including Shicku garden and Tokachi Millennium Forest. Shogo captures the beauty of Izumi-san's woodland planting in Tashiro's Forest on page 72.

"When I walk around Tashiro's Forest, especially in spring, I can imagine that there are dryads and naiads living here."

SUSAN BELL

An established lifestyle photographer, Susan loves capturing the field-to-fork journey. She is always inspired by the natural world and finds she is happiest outside, taking photographs in good light. You can see Susan's shots of natural beekeeping on page 78.

"There is a vitality and energy around natural beekeeping, which was a privilege to photograph. It's an incredible story to capture."

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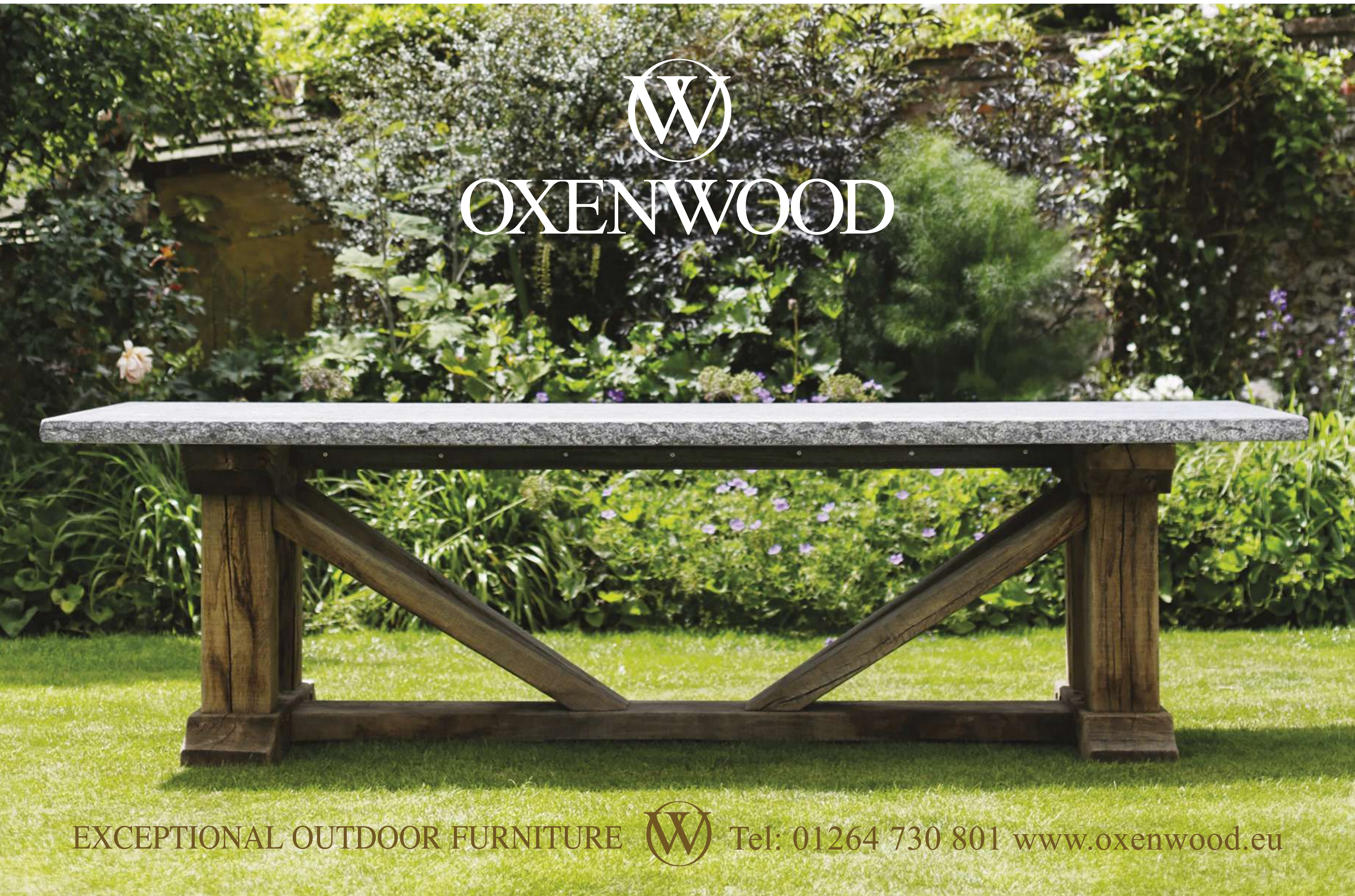

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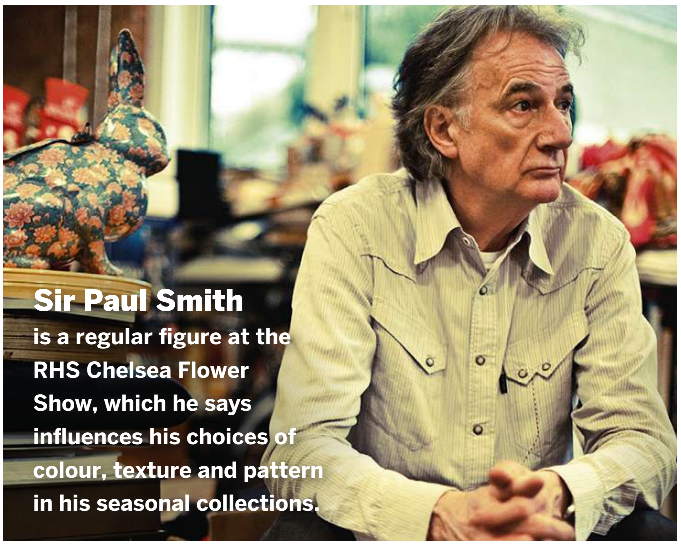
***Gardens Illustrated* Talk**
24 May 2016 – below

Great Dixter Celebration
20 June 2016 – page 11



Sir Paul Smith
is a regular figure at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, which he says influences his choices of colour, texture and pattern in his seasonal collections.

Luciano Giubbilei
Italian-born Luciano came to England in 1994 to study garden design. His international practice designs gardens characterised by the beauty of their spatial arrangement.

Tuesday 24 May 2016

Gardens Illustrated Talk

Join us at the Royal Geographical Society in London for an inspirational discussion between fashion designer Sir Paul Smith and garden designer Luciano Giubbilei

When Luciano Giubbilei first met world-renowned fashion designer Sir Paul Smith at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2011, it was a meeting that was to set Luciano on a new path in his design career. For our talk Luciano and Sir Paul will look back at the effects of that meeting and explore what for them are key relationships between fashion, plants, flowers and design.

Book now for Standard and Premium tickets. All tickets are allocated seating with Premium ticket holders seated in the front section of the lecture theatre. Premium guests also receive a glass of Laurent-Perrier champagne on arrival as well as a *Gardens Illustrated* goody bag.

Talk details

- **Date** Tuesday 24 May 2016.
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

PROGRAMME

- **6pm** Doors open – cash bar available. Premium ticket holders will be served a glass of Laurent-Perrier champagne.
- **7-8.15pm** Talk including Q&A.
- **9pm** Doors close.

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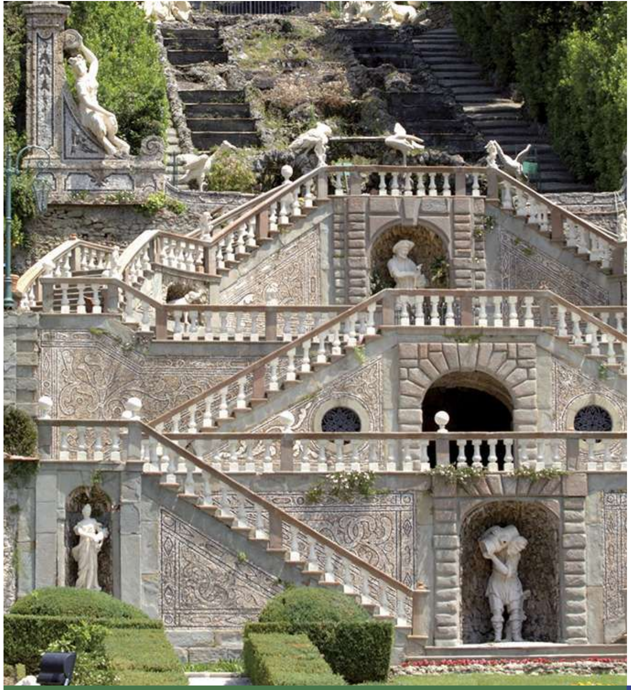

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Monday 20 June 2016

Celebrating Great Dixter

Join head gardener Fergus Garrett and garden writer Anna Pavord at Great Dixter to celebrate Christopher Lloyd's legacy and reflect on the garden's ongoing evolution

Great Dixter was the home of the late, great gardener and gardening writer Christopher Lloyd who spent more than 50 years creating, refining and experimenting in the garden – and referencing much of his work in his writing. Now under the stewardship of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust, and with Fergus Garrett as head gardener, Dixter continues as one of the world's most notable gardens. To mark the ten years since Christo's death, Fergus is joined by garden writer Anna Pavord. Her friendship with Christo spanned decades and the two corresponded and shared gardening opinions on both a personal and professional level.

For our reader event, you are welcome to spend the day at Great Dixter, immersing yourself in the gardens at your leisure in the morning, and then gathering in the afternoon for a talk with Fergus and Anna, who will celebrate Christo's legacy and consider what Great Dixter achieves today in terms of gardening education and excellence.

And since it's midsummer, we'll be celebrating the season too, ending the day with tea, scones, strawberries and champagne served in the garden.

Great Dixter's head gardener **Fergus Garrett** is an expert plantsman who gardened alongside Christopher Lloyd until his death in 2006. Fergus continues to garden in the spirit of innovation for which Christo was renowned and ensures that Great Dixter remains one of the world's finest gardens.

Anna Pavord is a renowned garden writer and author of numerous gardening books, including the widely praised *The Tulip*. Her friendship with Christo developed over many years and she talks of 'a dynamism about Great Dixter you don't find anywhere else'.

Event details

- **Date** Monday 20 June 2016.
- **Venue** Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH.

PROGRAMME

- **10.30am-2pm** guests invited to enjoy the gardens at their leisure
- **2pm-4.20pm** talk from Fergus Garrett and Anna Pavord in the Great Hall (with a break at 3pm for refreshments)
- **4.30pm** Tea, scones, strawberries and a glass of Champagne Taittinger

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Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please advise us when booking of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries. For more details about the day itself call Great Dixter on 01797 254048 or go to greatdixter.co.uk. Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye East Sussex TN31 6PH

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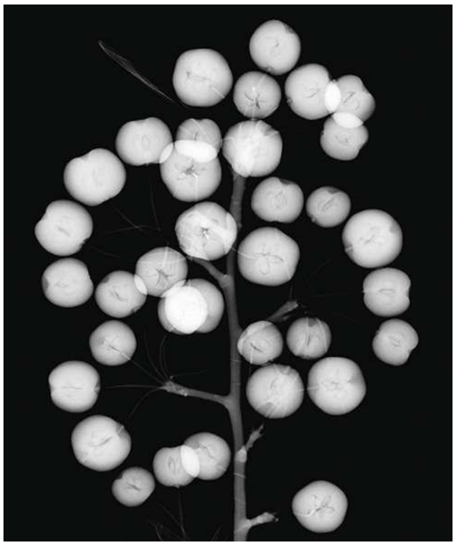
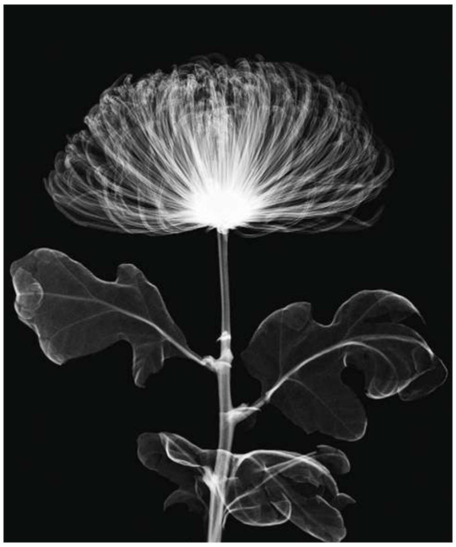
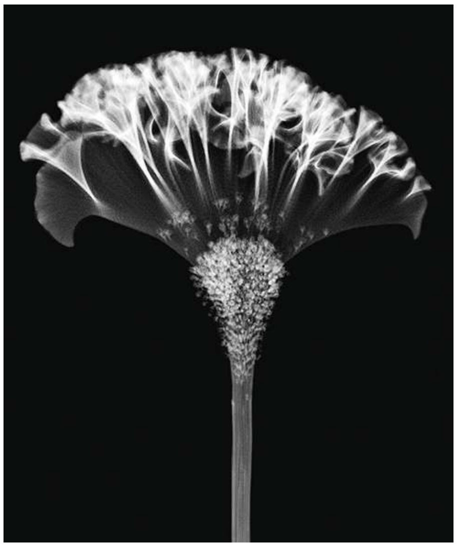
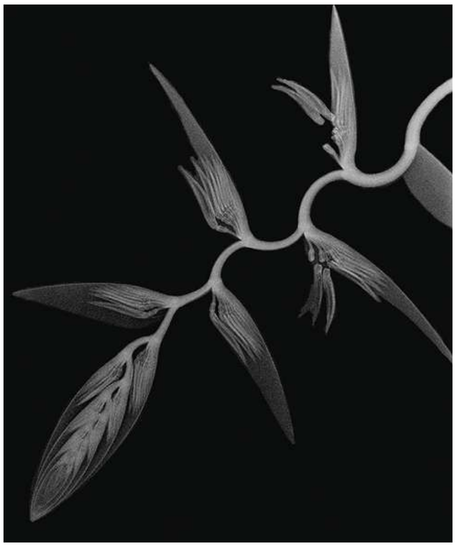
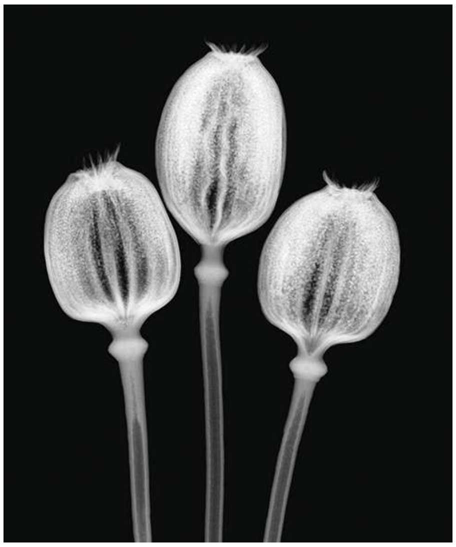
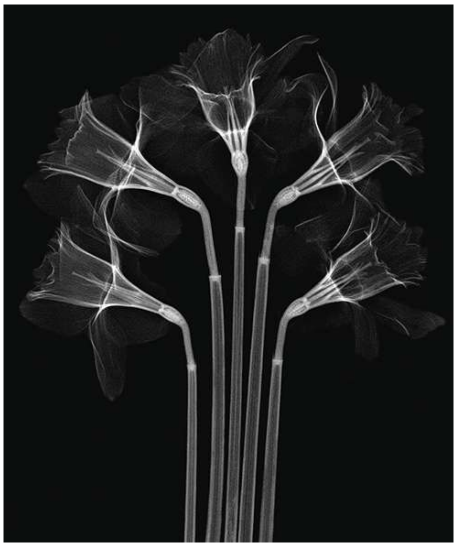




EXHIBITION

Back to black

In 2002 award-winning photographer Boo Beaumont took a radiograph of a plant, discovering to her delight that the resulting black-and-white image had a stunning transformative quality. Boo's new exhibition *Metamorph* at the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro features numerous X-ray images and a mesmeric 16-minute film that will take visitors on a visual journey through the inner workings of a flower. Until 30 June, tickets cost £4.50. **royalcornwallmuseum.org.uk**

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READER OFFER

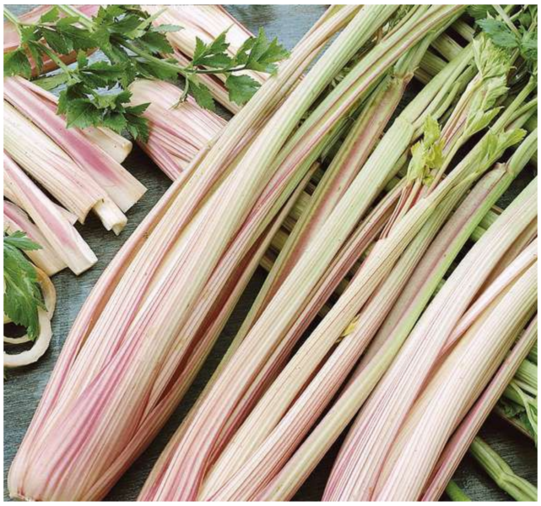
Capital growth

The contemporary garden fair GROW London is fast becoming one of the highlights of the garden fair season. Back for a third year on London's Hampstead Heath, on 24-26 June, it brings together contemporary garden design and expert horticultural advice with more than 100 exhibitors showcasing the best in garden furniture, rare plants, tools and accessories, as well as talks and workshops from leading names in the industry. Full-price tickets cost £10 in advance or £16 on the door, but *Gardens Illustrated* readers can buy advance tickets for the special price of £8. Simply enter the code GIGROW when prompted at **growlondon.com**

ORGANIC SEEDS

Minty fresh

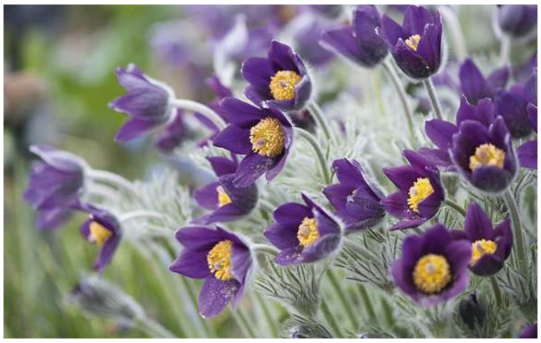
Easy on the eye and pretty on the plate, the attractive candy-striped, pink-and-white stalks of celery 'Peppermint Stick', which keep their pink colour when cooked and have a strong, spicy, celery flavour. New to the Organic Seed Catalogue, the packets cost £1.84. **organiccatalogue.com**



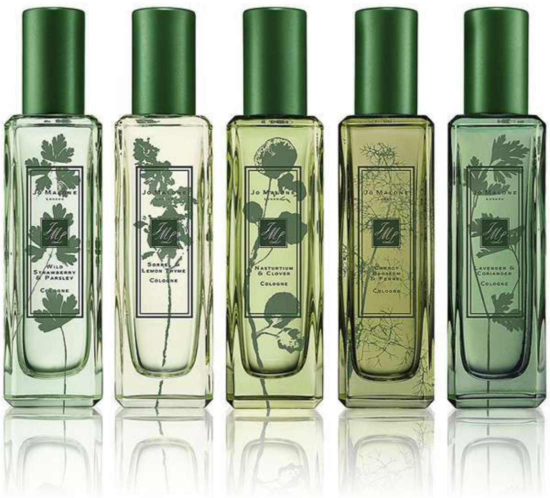
ONLINE GUIDE

Into the wild

A new, seasonal, online guide from the Wildlife Trust is packed with details of where and when to see some of the UK's top wild events. Among the highlights for April are places to spot early orchids and spectacular purple pasque flowers (below), which should be in bloom at Hartslock in Oxfordshire. **wildlifetrusts.org**



JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS



DELICIOUSLY DIFFERENT

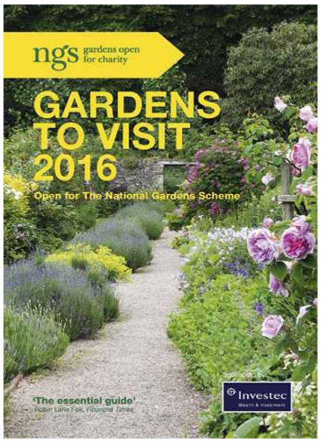
Luxury perfumer Jo Malone London has launched a new Herb Garden collection, inspired by plant combinations at The Chelsea Physic Garden. The five indulgent colognes – wild strawberry and parsley; sorrel and lemon thyme; nasturtium and clover; carrot blossom and fennel; and lavender and coriander – come in delicately illustrated, green glass bottles and are priced at £44 for a 30ml bottle. Visit jomalone.co.uk for more details.

JASON INGRAM

FESTIVAL

Royal fanfare

Highgrove House, the Gloucestershire home of HRH The Prince of Wales, is launching a new garden festival, which will take place over the week 11-16 April. Held within the Royal Gardens, Highgrove: The Garden Celebrated, will embody The Prince's enthusiasm for horticulture with an impressive programme of guest speakers and garden tours, as well as a spring plant fair and retail pavilion. Tickets are now on sale and range from £15, for a single garden tour, to £200, for a talk including a black-tie dinner. To buy tickets and find a full list of events, visit **highgroveshop.com/festival**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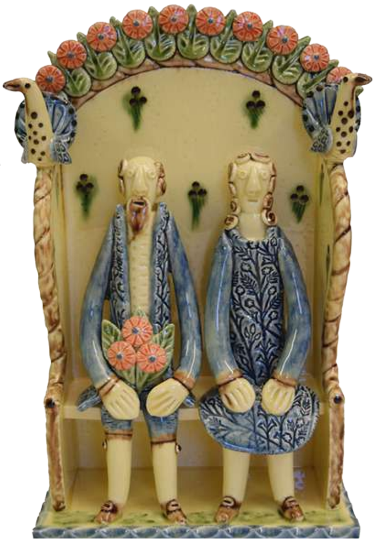
EXHIBITION

Sitting pretty



Potter Paul Young's joyful slipware, such as this wonderful couple on a bench, draws on the traditions of European folk art and 18th-century Staffordshire wares. You can currently see his work at a new exhibition, *Spring Life*, at Tinsmiths in Ledbury, which also includes work by Mark Hearld, whose colourful prints embody his fascination with animals and plants. The exhibitions runs until 23 April, 10am-5pm. **tinsmiths.co.uk**

Diary

Botanical cocktails.

- **Conwy Seed Fair**

Peruse plant stalls, seed stalls, traditional crafts and home-made produce at the 730-year-old Royal Charter Fair in Conwy. 1 April, 9am-4pm. The High Street, Conwy. Tel 01492 650851, conwybeekeepers.org.uk

- **Head Gardener's Guide at Woburn Abbey**

Woburn Abbey's head gardener, Andrew Bedford, is running a propagation workshop, offering expert advice and demonstrations, in the first of four one-day courses. 2 April, 10am-4pm. Cost included in garden admission price. Woburn Abbey and Gardens, Woburn, Bedfordshire MK17 9WA. Tel 01525 290333, woburnabbey.co.uk

- **Knoll Gardens Plant Fair**

As well as Knoll Gardens' own multiple award-winning grasses, locally grown azaleas, ferns, camellias and blueberries will be available to buy. 23 April, 10am-4pm. Free admission. Knoll Gardens, Stapehill Road, Hampreston, Wimborne BH21 7ND. Tel 01202 873931, knollgardens.co.uk

- **Toby's Garden Festival**

An exciting array of guest speakers, including Joe Swift, Christine Walkden and Jim Buttress, are lined up for Toby Buckland's Garden Festival at Powderham Castle. 29-30 April, 10am-5pm. £6 in advance; £7.50 on the door. Powderham Castle, Kenton, nr Exeter, Devon EX6 8JQ. Tel 01823 431767, tobygardenfest.co.uk

- **An Evening with Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain**

West Dean's Summer Dining Series begins this month with a talk by husband and wife gardening team Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain. A three-course dinner is included in the ticket price. 22 April, 6.30pm. £45. West Dean, nr Chichester, West Sussex PO18 0QZ. Tel 01243 811301, westdean.org.uk

- **Botanical Cocktails**

Learn how to make infusions, syrups, bitters and liquors with ingredients fresh from your garden with the Cocktail Gardener Lottie Muir. 28 April, 10.30am-4pm. £96 for RHS members; £109 for non-members. Hillside Events Centre, RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel 020 3176 5830, rhs.org.uk

- **Dan Pearson talk at Lismore Castle**

Award-winning garden designer Dan Pearson will talk about the creation of his Chatsworth/Laurent-Perrier garden at last year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, along with other projects, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan and the proposed Garden Bridge in London. 30 April, 6pm. €15. Lismore Castle, Lismore, Co. Waterford, Ireland. Tel +353 (0)58 54061, lismorecastlegardens.com

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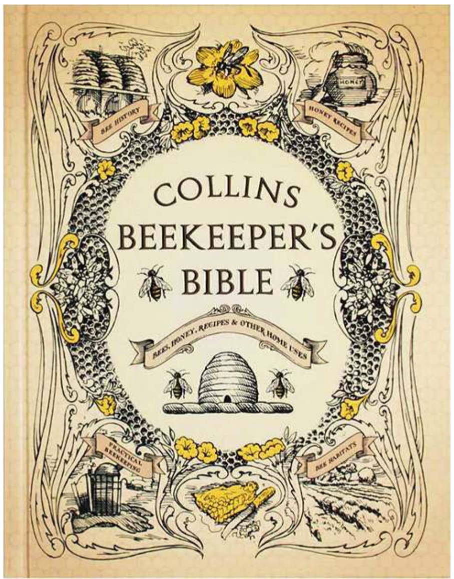
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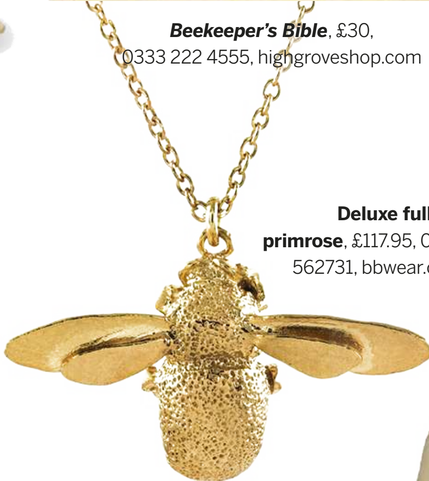

Bumblebee necklace, £150,
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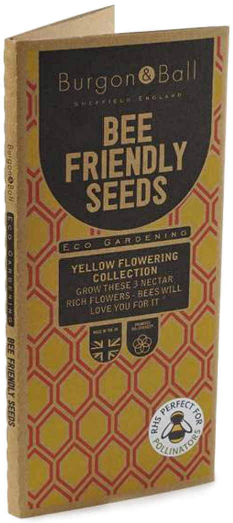
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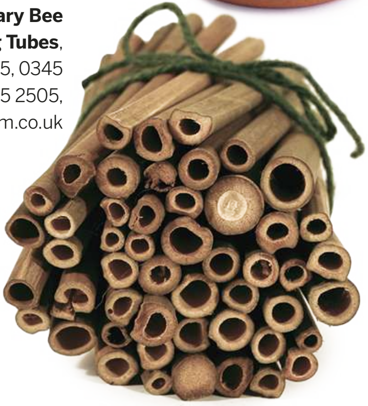

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Jacksons Fencing News, topical treats and more...

Think your garden is too small for an outdoor room? Think again…

Last month we featured our beautiful new Curve garden shelter, to inspire you with your spring garden projects.
Talking of spring, I hope I'm not tempting fate by mentioning that we should be looking forward to some better weather as the clocks go forward.
The Curve has created quite a stir since its launch earlier this year. The garden shelter with its generous interior space: approximately 3.1m wide x 5.3m deep and 2.2m high, is big enough to set up a dining area leaving plenty of room for a chill out zone as well. However, if space is at a premium in your garden, or maybe you have something more along the lines of a courtyard space to get creative with, then don't despair. You may not have to miss out on the pleasures of the outdoor room that many people find such a desirable idea these days, that sought after area for quality lifestyle activities; entertaining, partying or simply just relaxing in.
Please allow me to introduce you to what I describe as the Curve's little sister, the equally stylish Demi Curve. With a footprint of approximately 3.1m wide x 2.7m deep and 2.2m high.
Smaller than 'big sister', but perfectly formed, it is just right for the urban garden or courtyard, although it is still large enough to house a comfortably sized sofa and chairs set with a low table, just right for relaxing with your Kindle and your favourite tipple. Alternatively swap those for a dining table and chairs and it will make a delightful al fresco area for summer feasting. And like the larger Curve, the Demi Curve also has the additional protection of polycarbonate sheets, that cover the panels to give you a little extra shelter from showers and the wind.
As with all Jacksons products, the garden shelters are handmade from Jakcured timber, guaranteed for 25 years, so you can enjoy them for many years to come. Find out more by going to your dedicated page **www.jacksons-fencing.co.uk/lifestyle** where there are links to these and many other products and features.
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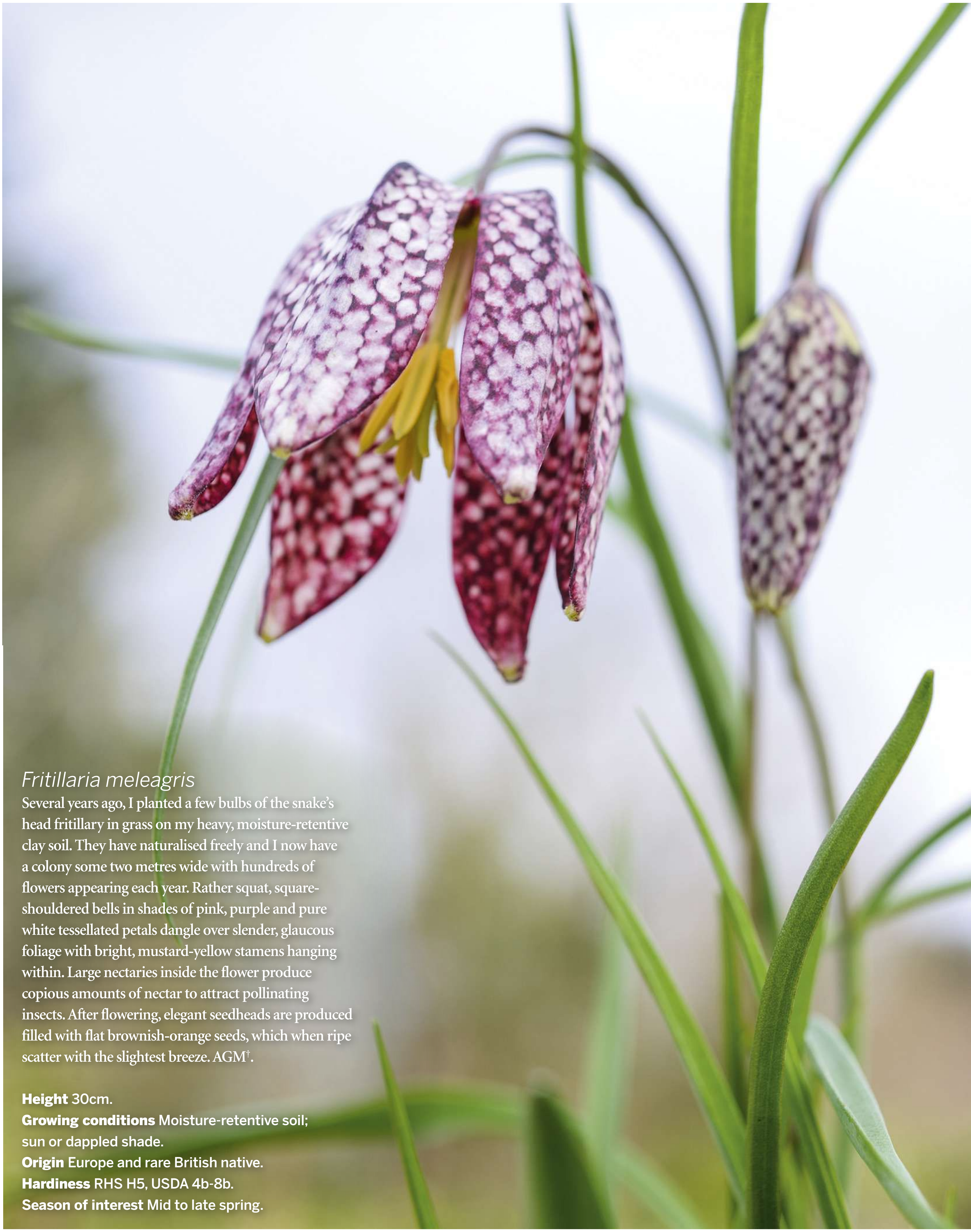


Fritillaria meleagris

Several years ago, I planted a few bulbs of the snake's head fritillary in grass on my heavy, moisture-retentive clay soil. They have naturalised freely and I now have a colony some two metres wide with hundreds of flowers appearing each year. Rather squat, square-shouldered bells in shades of pink, purple and pure white tessellated petals dangle over slender, glaucous foliage with bright, mustard-yellow stamens hanging within. Large nectaries inside the flower produce copious amounts of nectar to attract pollinating insects. After flowering, elegant seedheads are produced filled with flat brownish-orange seeds, which when ripe scatter with the slightest breeze. AGM[†].

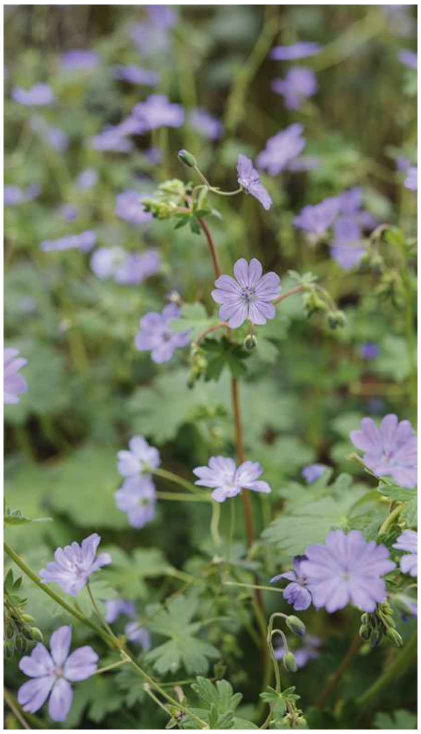
Height 30cm.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Origin Europe and rare British native.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 4b-8b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring.

Marina Christopher is a plantswoman who owns Phoenix Perennial Plants in Hampshire*.

April plants

April showers and longer, warmer days bring forth a host of Marina's woodland favourites and some bright and showy spring bulbs

WORDS MARINA CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM



Geranium pyrenaicum hybrid

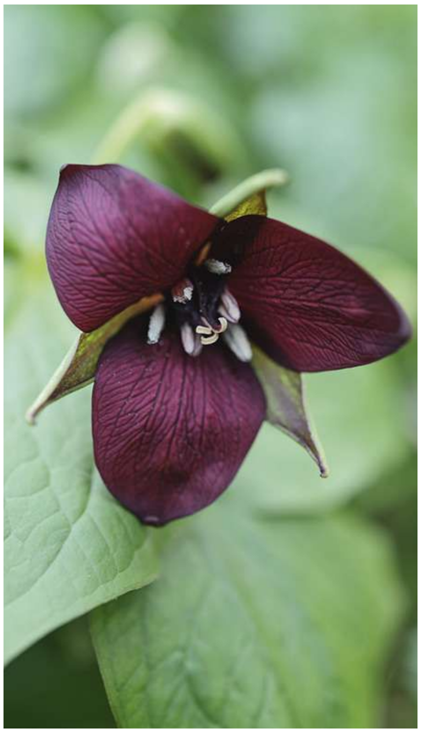
Geranium pyrenaicum 'Bill Wallis' is a lovely purple, small-flowering geranium with glabrous leaves and red stems that enjoys dappled shade. *G. pyrenaicum* 'Isparta' was found in the eponymous Turkish province, growing in full sun with hairy foliage, green stems and larger, pale mauvish-pink flowers and is altogether more substantial. I grow both on my nursery and discovered they readily produced a hybrid swarm. They are relatively short lived with a carrot-like root system and do not appreciate waterlogging.

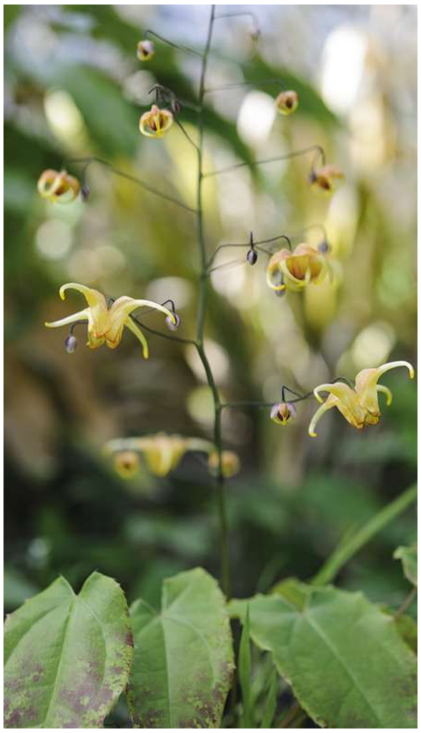
Height 20-45cm.
Origin Hybrid of *G. pyrenaicum* 'Bill Wallis' x *G. pyrenaicum* 'Isparta'.
Growing conditions Well-drained, non-waterlogged soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring to summer.

Trillium sulcatum hybrid

I acquired this deep reddish-maroon trillium as *T. sulcatum* but have recently been informed that it is a hybrid. Whatever its parentage, it is an amazing woodland plant emerging in mid-to-late April with bold trifoliate foliage beneath short flower stems and dark blooms. Many trillium flowers have an odour; some pleasant and others not so fragrant, and a visitor sniffing this hybrid announced that it smelt like "a dead bream". Slugs enjoy grazing the petals, sometimes consuming the entire flower but leaving the sepals intact.

Height 45cm.
Origin Eastern North America.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring.



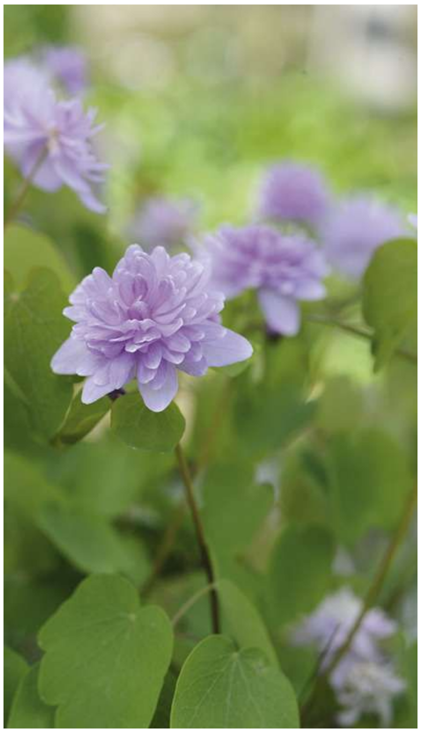


Epimedium 'Amber Queen'

This elegant, long-flowering epimedium was introduced by Robin White, of Blackthorn Nursery in Hampshire.
It's an Asiatic hybrid that requires more moisture than the Mediterranean species, which are notable for coping with dry shady habitats. Semi-evergreen, its toothed, heart-shaped young foliage is suffused with burgundy mottling. In April, arching spikes produce dozens of spider-like flowers with yellow spurs deepening to amber-orange around the throat.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Hybrid of *E. wushanense* 'Caramel' x *E. flavum*.
Growing conditions Moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade or sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Mid spring to summer.

*Open by appointment only. Email marina@phoenixperennialplants.co.uk for details. †Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.



Anemonella thalictroides f. *rosea* 'Oscar Schoaf'

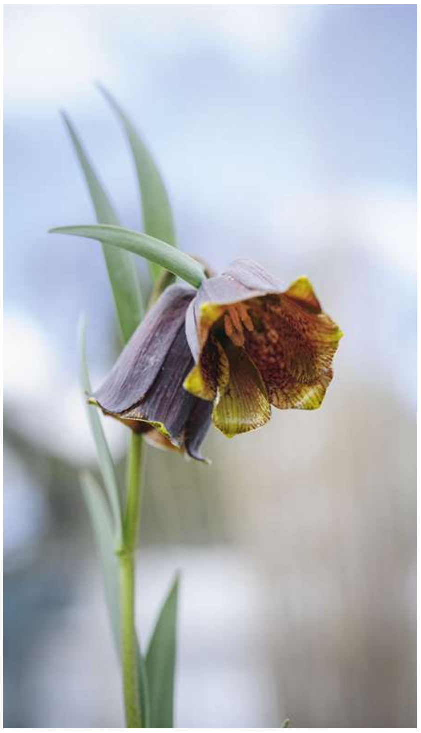
I generally avoid double flowers as many are sterile and so don't provide sustenance for insect pollinators, but I make an exception for this exquisite rue anemone. A diminutive woodlander with perfectly double, rosy-pink flowers and thalictrum-like foliage, hence its name. It emerges in late April and remains in flower for many weeks. It is best grown among plants of similar stature else it can be easily lost among the larger foliage of plants such as hostas. A little woodland gem.

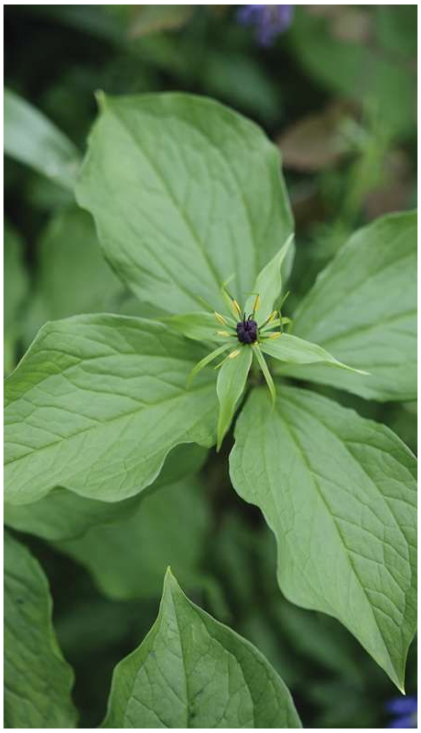
Height 10cm.
Origin Eastern North America.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, well-drained soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness USDA 5a-8b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring, summer dormant.

Fritillaria pyrenaica 'Cedric Morris'

This handsome fritillary hails from alpine meadows flowering soon after snows melt. It grows well in dappled shade and in some places in full sun as long as it has a relatively moisture-retentive soil. Although the species is often variable in colour with a single flower per stem, this form almost always bears two dark flowers per stem. It is strongly tessellated on both the outside and within the flower, with strongly recurved petals and a base colour of yellow overlaid with purplish-brown. AGM.

Height 30-40cm.
Origin Southern France, northwest Spain.
Growing conditions Well-drained, moisture-retentive soil; sun or dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5.
Season of interest Mid to late spring.





Paris quadrifolia

A subtle charmer, often overlooked in favour of more flamboyant subjects. From the same family as *Trillium*, it forms dense colonies through creeping rhizomes. In mid spring the foliage unfurls producing mounds of oval, green leaves, usually four (occasionally five) in number, topped by small, green flowers with four sepals, four slender petals, eight yellow stamens and a small, round black style in perfect symmetry. Following pollination, bluish-black berries and produced and disseminated by birds.

Height 30cm.
Origin Europe, rare British native.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring, summer dormant.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best

Many years ago I spent a memorable afternoon in Ducklington Mead, Oxfordshire (ducklington church.org.uk), holding a live grass snake so its head could be seen next to the flower of a snake's head fritillary. All in aid of a photographer friend who hoped to take an award-winning image. This, along with many other meadows are still full of these glorious flowers at this time of year and you can find the best sites near you at **fritillaria.org.uk**. Two sites worth visiting are North Meadow, Cricklade, Wiltshire (crickladeinbloom.co.uk) and Fox Fritillary Meadow, Framsden, Suffolk (suffolkwildlifetrust.org).

Spring woodlanders are some of my favourite plants; ephemeral but so welcome after the dearth of growth during winter. There are some

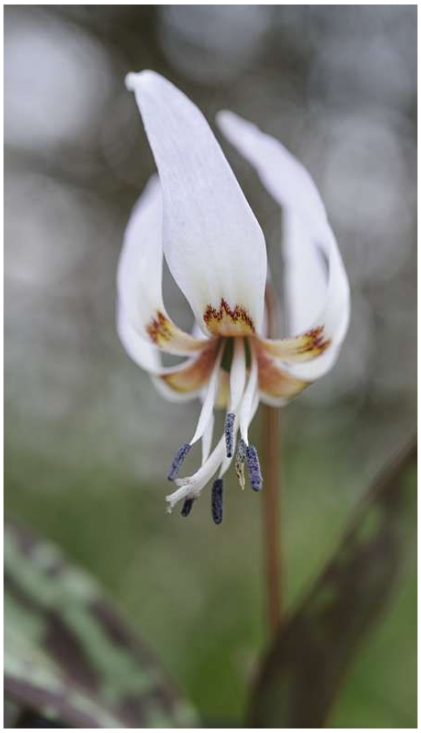
Fritillaria at North Meadow, Cricklade, Wiltshire.

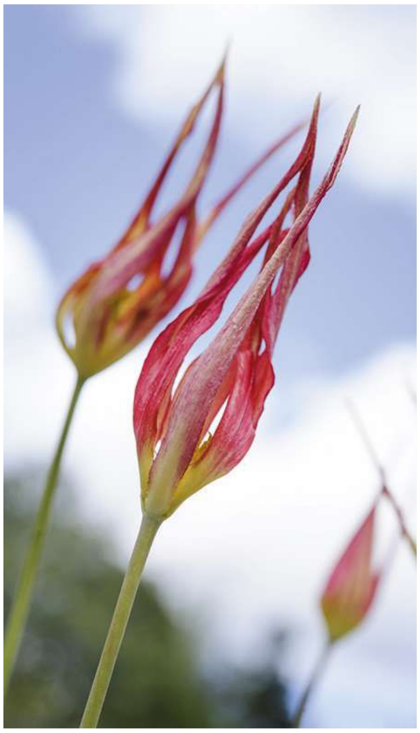
JOHN BARRATT / ALAMY

Erythronium dens-canis 'Snowflake'

In April the dark-green leaves emerge with chocolate-pink mottling, followed by flower stems with a single terminal bloom. The pure-white petals are swept back dramatically while the stamens, with their purple-tipped anthers, dangle enticingly for their insect pollinators. The throat of the flower is stained crimson and pink to attract attention. Its pointed off-white bulbs, which resemble a canine incisor (hence the name dog's tooth violet), are naked and must not dry out so are best purchased in the green.

Height 15cm.
Origin Europe.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade or sun.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring.





Tulipa acuminata

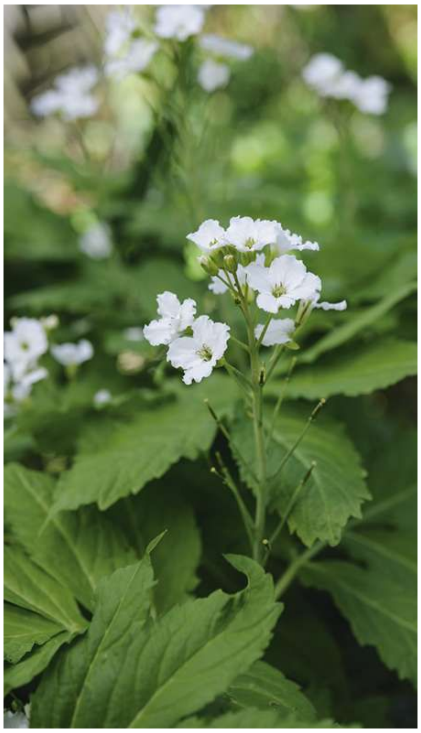
From its name, this bizarrely shaped tulip appears to be a species and is known as the horned tulip but it is almost certainly a hybrid originating in Istanbul and exported to Europe some two centuries ago. Flower stems produce a single bloom with exceedingly elongated tepals with a base colour of yellow but infused and streaked with a fiery scarlet. In sunny weather the sharply pointed tepals twist and turn, giving a slightly awkward and ungainly appearance. A curiosity rather than a great beauty, requiring full sun and good drainage.

Height 20-40cm.
Origin Turkey.
Growing conditions Sharp-drainage; sun and prolonged dry summer.
Hardiness rating RHS H5, USDA 3a-9b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring.

Cardamine heptaphylla

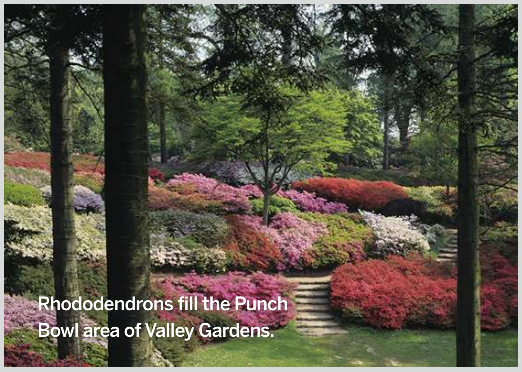
This lovely woodlander with pure-white notched petals over mid-green mounds of palmate foliage helps uplift dappled shade. Unlike its relative, *C. quinquefolia* with its lovely mauve flowers and an invasive running habit, this species remains as a tight clump. Cardamines are members of the *Brassicaceae* family and as they're in flower in April and May, they are often host to the delightful orange-tip butterfly, which is on the wing at this time of year.

Height 30-45cm.
Origin Western and central Europe.
Growing conditions Humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.
Season of interest Mid to late spring, summer dormant.



wonderful gardens to visit and buy these lovely plants, but one of the best is **Junker's Nursery** where Karan, Nick and Torsten Junker are planting up a 50-acre site with trees, shrubs and perennials. Visitors are strictly by appointment only, but the nursery has an extensive collection of epimediums and plants are available to order online. Higher Cobhay, Milverton, Somerset TA4 1NJ. Tel 01823 400075, junker.co.uk

Valley Gardens is a fabulous area of winding woodland walks with National Collections of magnolias, Himalayan and Chinese birches, rhododendrons and azaleas, as well as spectacular displays of smaller, shade-loving perennials. Crown Estate Office, Windsor Great Park, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 2HT. windsorgreatpark.co.uk



JS SIRA / GAP PHOTOS

Rhododendrons fill the Punch Bowl area of Valley Gardens.

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IN THE GARDEN

Jojo worries about when to plant vegetables and how to protect her seedlings, and considers why rhubarb is such an essential plant in her garden

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

There is always an element of anxiety in April. I don't have a greenhouse or any suitable windowsills on which to propagate so I have to beg tabletop space in my youngest daughter's south-facing bedroom. It's far from ideal; newly emerged seedlings must take their chances next to the dressing-up box and within crashing distance of the rocking horse. I sow into compost in square module trays to maximise space and cover with cling film until seeds germinate. In order to minimise the time plants will have to spend indoors, I watch the weather and sow my vegetables seeds late. It's a gamble and I worry about their welfare. The final stage, when seedlings have been pricked out and potted on, is the worst. I take them into the garden during the day and stack them on the kitchen table at night. There is always the chance I will forget to bring them in and I am relieved when I finally get them in the ground.

Having cared so lovingly for my tender young plants, I want to maximise their chances of success. They are in shock for the first few days after planting and should be treated as convalescent. To minimise the trauma, I try to plant into ground covered with plastic a week before to warm the soil. If it's very dry or windy, I cover the new arrivals with fleece while they put down roots. I make sure not to overcrowd plants, as weak plants competing for food and water will attract slugs. I also plant flowers that will attract aphid-eating insects such as hoverflies (see box below) alongside them.

One of the best-looking parts of my April plot is the rhubarb patch. The dark rain-drenched soil makes a good backdrop for this brightly coloured perennial. I think of rhubarb fondly as a cherished old friend; the undemanding kind. One of the first things I planted on the allotment 15 years ago, it has kept us in compotes and tarts ever since. It's so easy to maintain, requiring only that you keep bindweed and couch grass at bay and apply a ring of mulch at the end of the growing season (around the stalks, not over).

Rhubarb is usually sold as a crown and transplanted when dormant into well-fed soil. You can propagate from existing crowns by slicing a spade through a section of the crown and lifting. I grow *Rheum* x *hybridum* 'Timperley Early' its early emergence heralding spring. When the pink stalk topped by a crinkled leaf unfurls, it's as if a small flag is waving winter goodbye. I'm also tempted by 'The Sutton' (£3.05, ashridgetrees.co.uk), a mid-season heavy cropper of exceptional flavour, and 'Cawood Delight' (£6.95, chrisbowers.co.uk), with super shiny, dark crimson sticks for eye-popping culinary effect. ▷

WHAT TO SOW NOW

- Looking through the Chiltern Seeds catalogue I've earmarked several helpful flowers for this year: the marigold *Tagetes* 'Burning Embers' (£1.75), a beautiful, dark-orange bloom outlined with a thin rim of yellow; *Limnanthes douglasii* (£1.98), the poached egg plant with its saucer shape and vivid yellow centre edged with white; and pot marigolds, *Calendula officinalis*. The latter are good for pollinators and have edible flowers so I'm also sowing the Chiltern Seeds Mixture of all Varieties, which the catalogue says will 'brighten gardens, lives and outlooks' – not bad for £2.30.
- As well as starting off some more plants indoors (peppers, aubergines and tomatoes) I will be sowing a packet of Glass Gem Corn, a souvenir from a trip to California. Its gleaming rainbow-hued cobs look sensational. The other Chiltern Seeds import I will be growing is the tomatillo (*Physalis philadelphica*) cultivar 'Purpleino' (£2.45). Also known as the Mexican green tomato, tomatillos are more cold tolerant than outdoor tomatoes and their curious mix of lime and tomato flavour is addictive in salsa.
- **Turn to page 112 to find out about a special Chiltern Seeds offer.**

IN THE KITCHEN

You might think of rhubarb as a quintessentially English ingredient, but it originates in China and pops up in Middle Eastern cookery too, where it is used in savoury dishes. In the Zoroastrian religion of ancient Iran the mother and father of mankind grow up out of a rhubarb plant, which in turn has grown out of the bones of the first man Gayomard. The Persian word for rhubarb (*rivas*) means shining light. In Persian cookery, rhubarb is used in *khoresh*, thick sauces made with the fruits and herbs of the season along with meat and vegetables and eaten with rice (like stew). The essence of *khoresh* is balance, reflecting the many centuries of refinement behind Persian cuisine. *Faisinjan*, a sweet-sour dish of pomegranates, walnuts and chicken, is the most famous but this lesser-known combination of beef and rhubarb is also good.

USEFUL COOKERY TECHNIQUE

No. 4 *Making custard*

Whisk together four egg yolks and 1tbsp sugar in a bowl. Heat 200ml double cream in a pan (add nutmeg or a vanilla pod if desired) then pour on to the yolks. Mix well and return to the pan, stir over a low heat until the custard thickens.

Slice two medium onions finely and chop 500g of stewing beef (you could use lamb instead) into chunks. Heat two tablespoons of butter and fry the onions until soft and golden, add the meat and brown, season with salt and pepper and a three-quarter teaspoon of allspice, then cover with water (just) and simmer until the meat is tender (two hours). Half an hour before eating, de-stalk and finely chop a small bunch of parsley and a slightly smaller bunch of mint, heat two tablespoons of butter and fry gently for five minutes before adding to the meat. Ten minutes before serving, trim 400g of rhubarb into 2cm chunks and fry in butter for two minutes before adding the juice of half a lemon. Cook for a few minutes then add to the beef. Serve with pilau rice.

My rhubarb is ready to pick and eat from February onwards and carries on usually into August but it gradually streaks green and becomes more sour. Day to day I poach it in the oven as this concentrates the flavour and keeps pieces soft but intact. I eat it on muesli, porridge or with yoghurt. Star anise adds warm liquorice flavour but grated ginger or orange zest are also good. **Baked rhubarb with star anise and pomegranate or orange juice** For four servings take six to eight stalks of rhubarb (depending on how thick it is), three star anise, one pomegranate or two oranges and granulated sugar to taste (about three or four tablespoons). Preheat the oven to 160°C/ gas 3. Wash, trim and cut the rhubarb into 4cm chunks and put into an ovenproof dish. Take the seeds out of the pomegranate and squeeze them through a sieve, (using the back of a wooden spoon) or squeeze oranges. Scatter over the sugar, the star anise and a tablespoon or two of water. Cover with foil and bake in the oven until soft (around 40-50 minutes). Serve warm or cold. □

RECIPES

Rhubarb jelly
Baked rhubarb exudes a wonderful pink juice, which can be used to make jelly. Simply add 250ml of water to the roasting dish along with the juice (see above). When tender drain off the juice reserving the rhubarb to use as compote. Pour **100ml of juice** into a pan and heat (but do not let it boil as this will impair the flavour). Taste and add a little **caster sugar** if it is too tart, stirring to dissolve. In another bowl, soften the gelatine (use **4 leaves gelatine** to **450ml clear pink juice**) in cold water for 2-3 minutes, squeeze the leaf (now sticky and flexible) and add to the warmed liquid off the heat. Stir well until it's dissolved. Pour this mixture into the jug with the rest of the juice and whisk in. Pour into a jelly mould and leave to set. Before turning out your jelly, dip the moulds in a bowl of just boiled water very briefly and then run a knife around the top before tipping out. Serve with custard (see above) or cream. I use rhubarb scattered into open tarts of short crust pastry (baked blind first) sometimes with custard, sometimes glazed with syrup. You can also make a plate pie by lining a deep pie dish with **400g short crust pastry** and filling it with **chopped rhubarb (250g plus 90g sugar)** top with a pastry lid and cook in a hot oven (220°C) for 15 minutes then turn the heat down to 180°C for 25 minutes.

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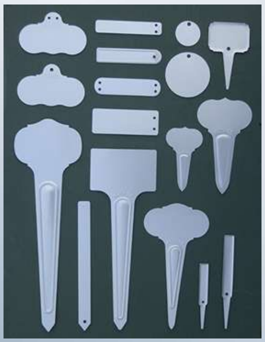

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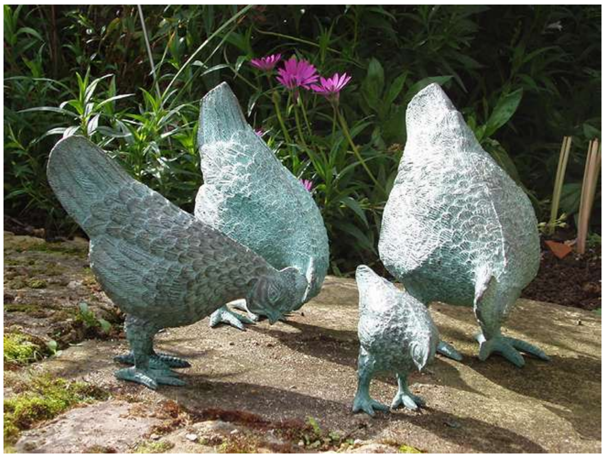

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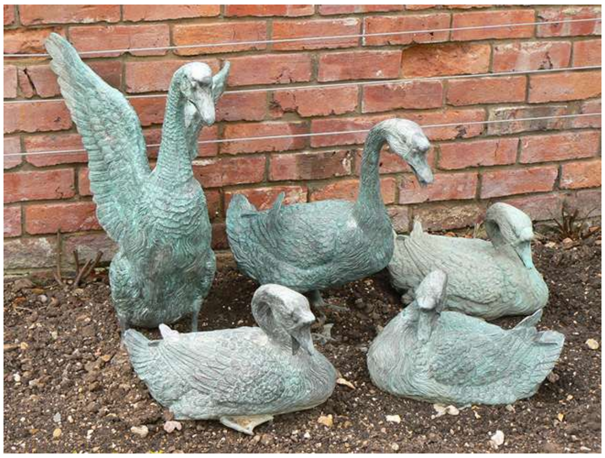

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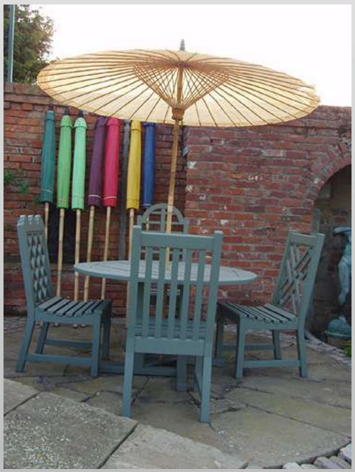

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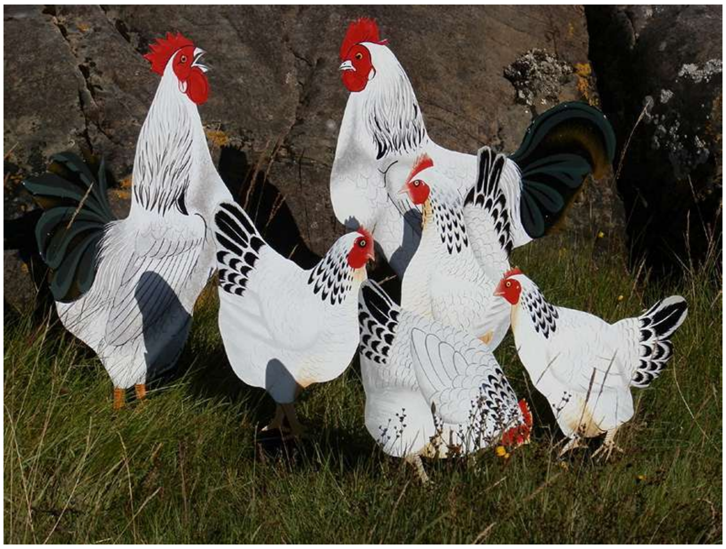

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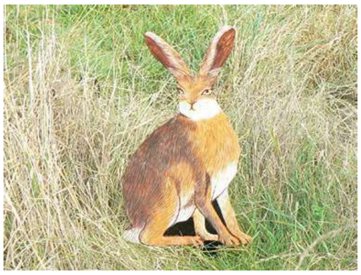

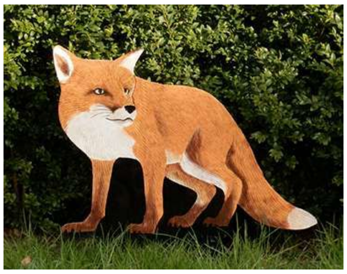

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Jamie Butterworth

At just 21 the YoungHort co-founder and RHS Ambassador is show plant manager for nursery Hortus Loci, preparing plants for some of RHS Chelsea Flower Show's top designers

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory Flicking through the TV channels when I was nine, and coming across *Gardeners' World* – I was immediately captivated. I asked my mum if she would buy me some seeds, pots and compost. I still remember that feeling of excitement and wonder, watching seeds germinate, grow, and then flower.

Who are your horticultural heroes? Since my teenage years I have been somewhat obsessed with RHS Chelsea Flower Show, watching the gardens on TV, and idolising the designers. It is ironic that my job is now to grow the plants for these designers, working alongside them to ensure that their plants are exactly as they imagine.

Most valuable training Having gone straight from school to spend two years training at Askham Bryan College in York, I took the leap and moved south to study and work at RHS Garden Wisley. This was an incredible two years and has given me the most amazing opportunities I could ever imagine, leading to the dream job I have today.

With whom would you most like to have tea in the garden? David Cameron. After his remarks back in 2011, comparing horticulturists to street cleaners, I would love to have the opportunity to explain what an incredibly fun, exciting and diverse industry horticulture really is.

What is the hardest gardening related thing you've ever had to do? My radio show for BBC Radio London is up with some of the most difficult things I've ever done. Mainly due to the timing of the show at 4.30am on Saturday morning. I love every second of it though, which makes the 2am alarm a little more bearable.

What principles have guided your attitude to gardening? I have always been taught to give anything a go once – this applies to gardening too. For example, the only way to find out how a plant will react to a certain method of pruning is to give it a go and see what happens. The same goes for planting combinations, it is only by experimenting and observing plants growing together that you can create some of the most incredibly beautiful borders.

Contact jb@hortusloci.co.uk

YoungHort was set up in 2013 by a team of young horticulturists to help assist and inform other young horticulturists already working in the industry, as well as those interested in finding opportunities. Find out more at **younghort.com**

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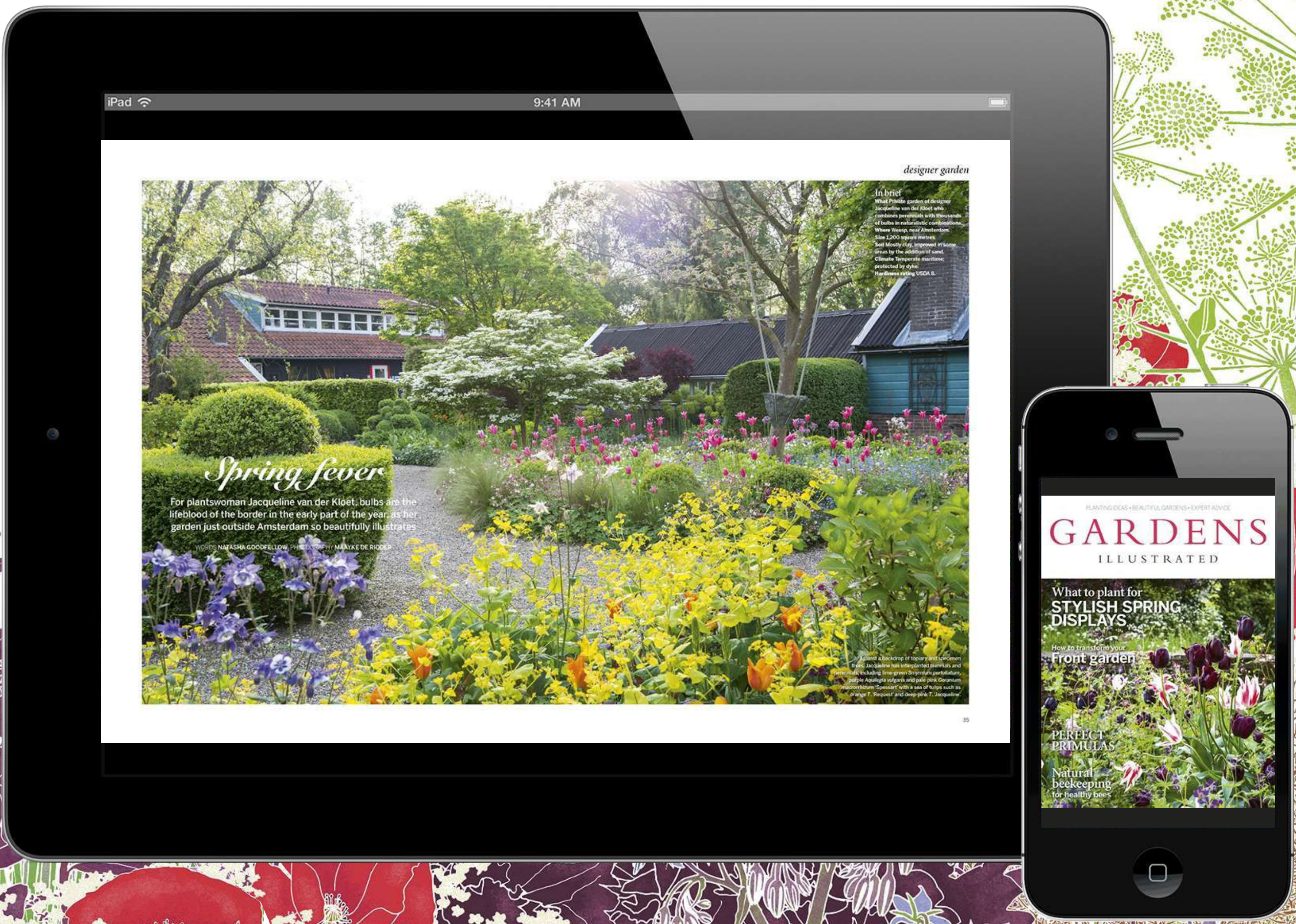

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designer garden

In brief
What Private garden of designer Jacqueline van der Kloet who combines perennials with thousands of bulbs in naturalistic combinations.
Where Weesp, near Amsterdam.
Size 1,200 square metres.
Soil Mostly clay, improved in some areas by the addition of sand.
Climate Temperate maritime; protected by dyke.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Spring fever

For plantswoman Jacqueline van der Kloet, bulbs are the lifeblood of the border in the early part of the year, as her garden just outside Amsterdam so beautifully illustrates

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHY MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Against a backdrop of topiary and specimen trees, Jacqueline has interplanted biennials and perennials, including lime-green *Smyrnium perfoliatum*, purple *Aquilegia vulgaris* and pale-pink *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart' with a sea of tulips such as orange *T.* 'Request' and deep-pink *T.* 'Jacqueline'.

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Spring fever

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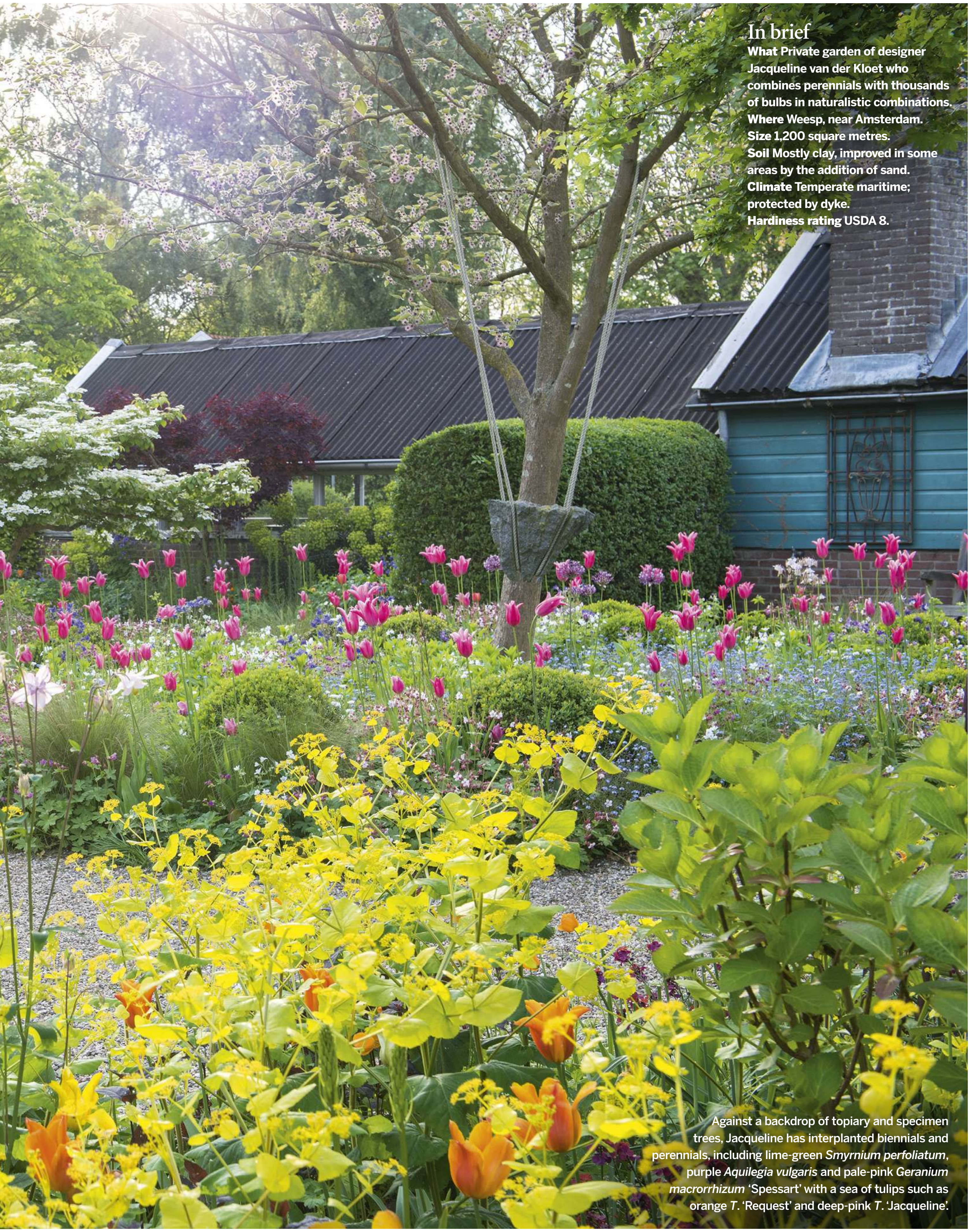

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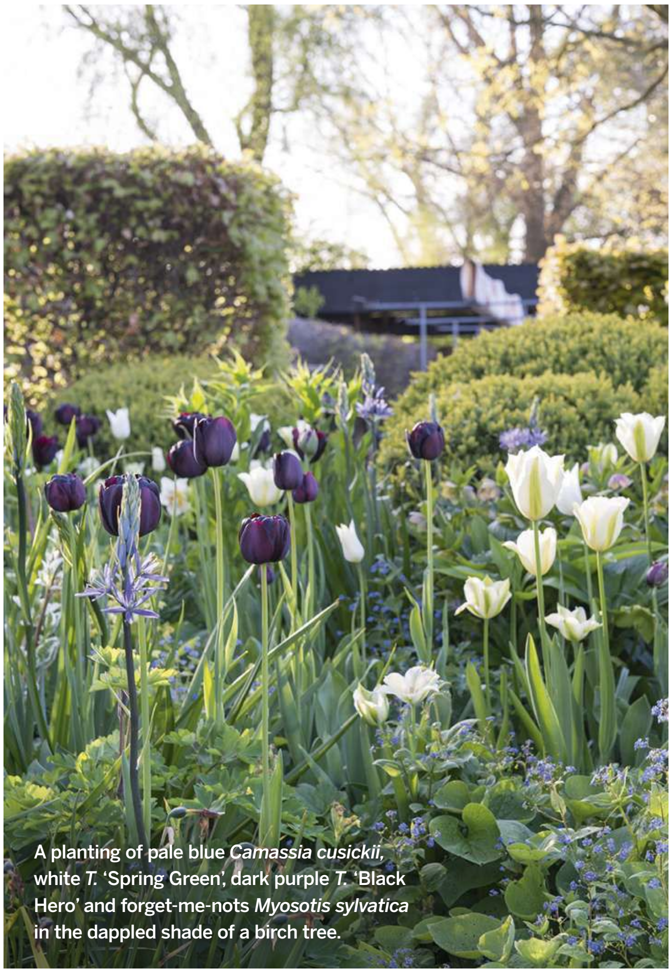


A planting of pale blue *Camassia cusickii*, white *T.* 'Spring Green', dark purple *T.* 'Black Hero' and forget-me-nots *Myosotis sylvatica* in the dappled shade of a birch tree.

A river of rich yellow *T.* 'Jewel of Spring' leads the eye through a bed of the golden grass *Milium effusum* 'Aureum' and variegated *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Overdam' to the scarlet *T.* 'Aladdin' beyond.

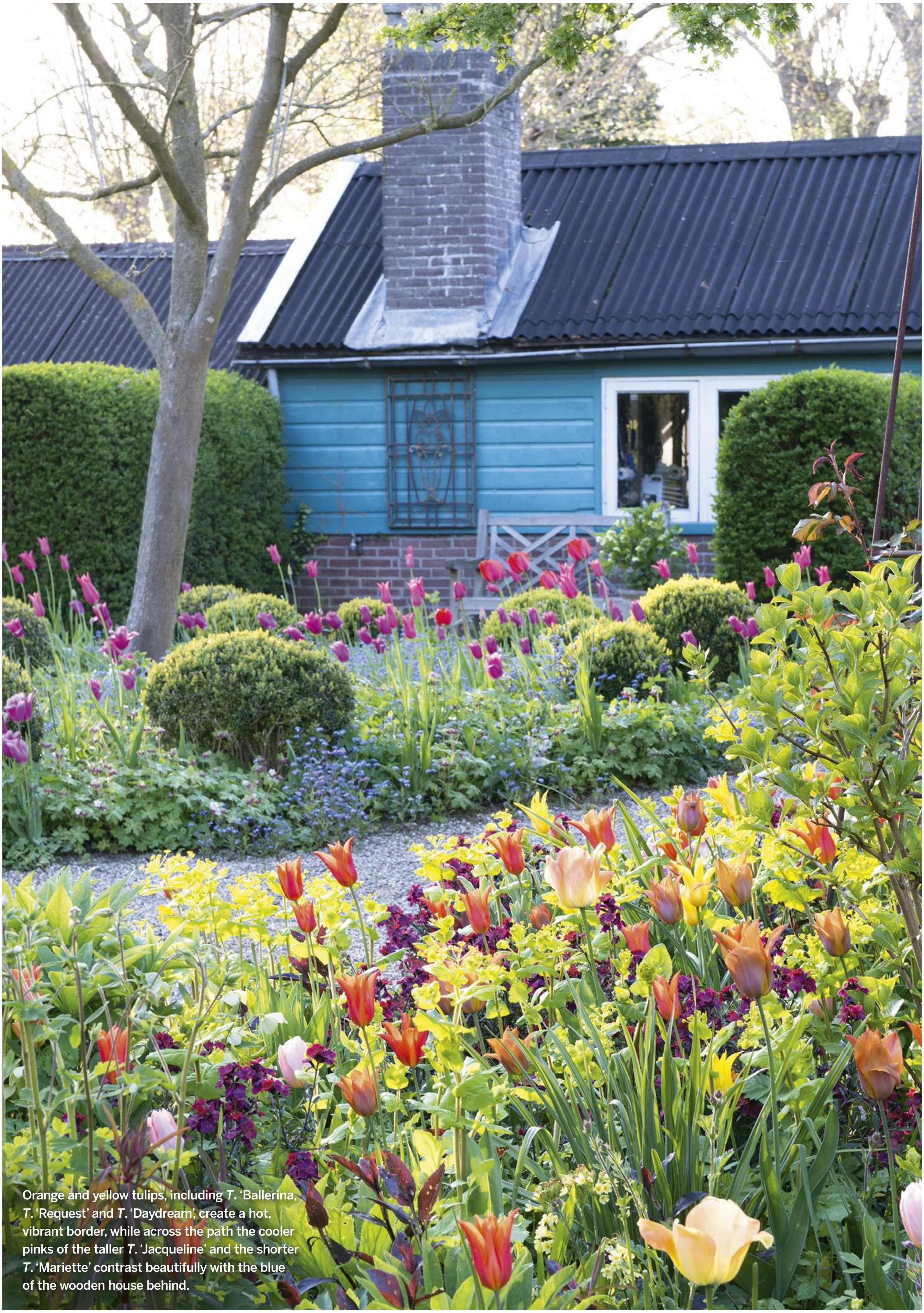
> *Walking around the 'Tea Garden' on a beautiful spring day, it's easy to see why Jacqueline is in demand*

Garden designer Jacqueline van der Kloet is the first to admit that luck has played a big part in her life. When she was 19 years old and forbidden from applying to art college, it was luck she heard about the school for garden and landscape architecture in Boskoop near The Hague, of which her parents did approve. After graduation when, inspired by visits to English gardens, she and two friends wanted to build a garden to open to the public, it was luck they found a near-perfect site – a decommissioned military installation complete with a small nursery on an island just outside Amsterdam – and luck that they were the highest bidders at the sealed bids auction.

It was to some extent luck that the editor of *Vtwonen,* a respected home and gardens magazine, visited the garden when it opened in 1986, then planted by Jacqueline with only perennials, and asked her to write a column. And it was pure luck when she was asked by the International Flower Bulb Centre to choose some bulbs to experiment with in her garden. What is not luck, though, is everything that has happened since. Now one of the world's leading plantswomen, Jacqueline has written nine books and worked on projects all over the globe: with Piet Oudolf on Battery Park in New York, the Lurie Garden in Chicago and at the New York Botanical Garden; in Hanover, Germany, for Expo 2000 and at Keukenhof in the Netherlands, where she has created seven gardens over a ten-acre site.

Walking around the 'Tea Garden' (as the patch of land she and her friends bought is now known) on a beautiful spring day, it's easy to see why she is in demand. On what was a jungle of brambles, hawthorns and overgrown beech hedges, a sinuous gravel path winds around beds she has planted in her signature naturalistic style with tulips, alliums, camassias, hellebores, geraniums and aquilegias. Hedges of beech, hornbeam and ligustrum provide a lush, green structure and backdrop, while topiary and clipped balls of box, umbrella-pruned *Ligustrum delavayanum* and *Crataegus monogyna,* and a beautifully spreading *Viburnum plicatum* 'Watanabe' add a sense of rhythm. A tall thuja hedge encircling a central pond prevents the garden being seen in its entirety. New and breathtaking compositions are revealed with every twist in the path – here a bed burnished with golden *Tulipa* 'West Point', coppery *T.* 'Request' and the wonderfully dark *Erysimum* 'Spice Island'; further on in a shadier spot, *T.* 'Burgundy' shines against whorls of hellebore foliage.

The strongest impression is of tulips, but when Jacqueline first started experimenting with bulbs, it was three ▷



Orange and yellow tulips, including *T*. 'Ballerina', *T*. 'Request' and *T*. 'Daydream', create a hot, vibrant border, while across the path the cooler pinks of the taller *T*. 'Jacqueline' and the shorter *T*. 'Mariette' contrast beautifully with the blue of the wooden house behind.

Although Jacqueline loves vibrant colours, she also enjoys mixing the many hues of green, such as the box balls here alongside the foliage of hellebores and privet hedge.

▷ years before she ordered a tulip. "I knew tulips from Keukenhof where they are planted in blocks," she says. "I wanted to do something more natural." She had started with grape hyacinths, scillas, crocuses and snowdrops and made the classic beginners mistake. "I ordered far too many species, in quantities that were far too small," she laughs. Despite this, she liked the effect when they appeared the following year. "Bulbs give you that incredible feeling of spring," she says. "I can almost feel myself coming to life with the flowers."

When Jacqueline did eventually add tulips to the mix, she loved the results and has since planted tens of thousands. Three times during spring she walks the garden, notebook in hand, jotting down where there are spaces or where a different colour or new cultivar might look good. She mixes the bulbs in a wheelbarrow in November and scatters them on to the soil, planting them where they fall. After they have flowered, she deadheads and leaves the foliage to feed the bulb. "I never dig them up," she says. "Some disappear but many come back, and as the perennials take over they hide the dying leaves." Of those that do return, Jacqueline recommends the Darwin hybrids; the single late cultivars such as 'Maureen', with its snow-white, egg-shaped bloom, and the lily-flowered tulips such as 'Jacqueline', which has thrived in the garden for more than 15 years. Disappointingly, it's named not for Jacqueline but after an unknown namesake. Surely, with a little luck, it won't be long before she has one to call her own. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

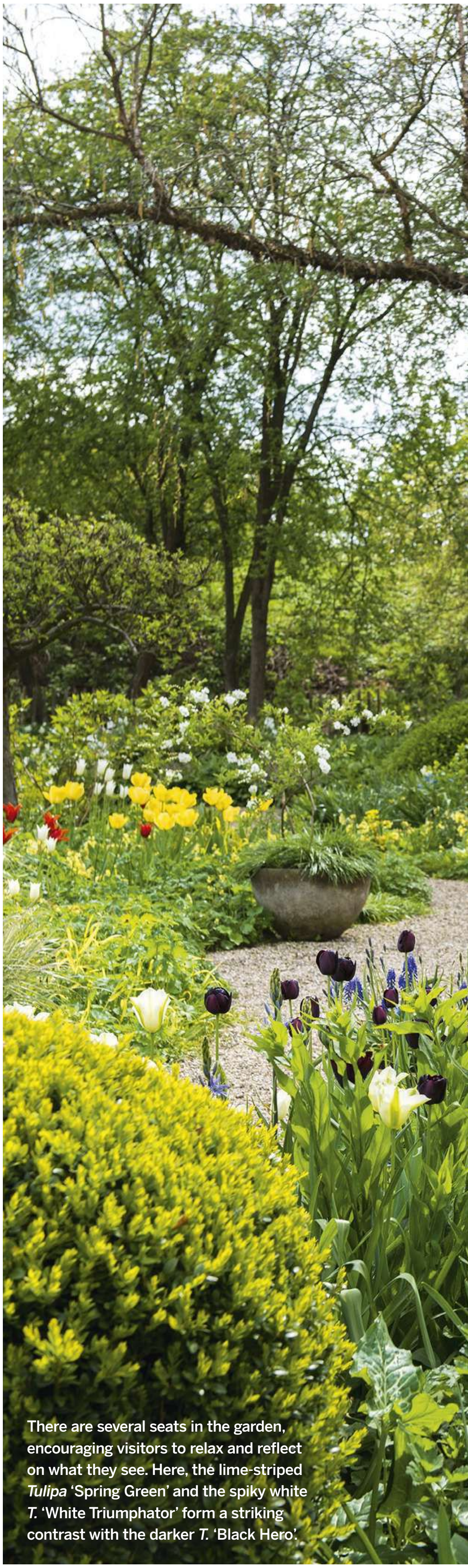
De Theetuin, Ossenmarkt 34, 1381 LX Weesp, the Netherlands.

Tel +31 (0)6374 10027.

Website theetuin.nl

Open Monday–Saturday, 10am–5pm. Three themed weekends are held every year when the teahouse is open and there are plant sales. A bulb festival is held on 15–17 April.

• Turn over for Jacqueline's four suggestions for planting tulips in perennial schemes.



There are several seats in the garden, encouraging visitors to relax and reflect on what they see. Here, the lime-striped *Tulipa* 'Spring Green' and the spiky white *T.* 'White Triumphator' form a striking contrast with the darker *T.* 'Black Hero'.

Jacqueline's tips for using bulbs in perennial borders

Order your bulbs before 15 July so you can ensure you get what you want.

Plant at the right time. Snowdrops should not be planted later than early October. Smaller, early flowering bulbs, such as scilla and crocus, should be planted in the first half of October; daffodils in late October; tulips in November, when the soil is cold; and alliums in December.

Plant in the right conditions. Tulips like well-drained soil and sun; daffodils can handle more moisture and shade.

Let the style of the garden dictate your choice of bulbs. If it's formal, *Fritillaria imperialis* would be a good choice, while a woodland area would suit bluebells.

Sequence your plantings so they flower at different times: crocus, muscari, tulips and scilla, daffodils, bluebells.

Better to plant too deep than too shallow – at least 15cm is good for tulips.

Better to order only a few cultivars in large quantities than a small number of many different cultivars.

Invest in a bulb planter if you plan on planting a lot. They make it simpler to gauge depth and are easier on your back.

Don't braid or remove the leaves or stems of tulips if you want them to naturalise.

Don't worry too much about spacing. Catalogues will tell you to plant 10cm apart but I prefer a more natural look, scattering them and planting them where they fall. Tulips are strong and can grow through other plants without harming them.

Four spring combinations – 1 Purple reign

1 *Heuchera* 'Stormy Seas' Easy to grow and good for dappled shade and containers. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

2 *Lunaria rediviva* Lovely flower followed by beautiful seedheads. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 5-8†.

3 *Pulmonaria officinalis* An easy plant that seeds everywhere in both sun and shade. 30cm. RHS H6.

4 *Carex comans* 'Bronze Form' Jacqueline values its 'graceful performance' and uses it in pots, where overhanging evergreen leaves ripple in the wind. 30cm. RHS H4.

5 *Hyacinthoides hispanica* The Spanish bluebell multiplies easily, even in the darkest shade. 40cm. RHS H7, USDA 5a-8b.

6 *Matteuccia struthiopteris* A wonderful, rapidly spreading fern for damp, shady areas. Buds are edible. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 2a-8b.

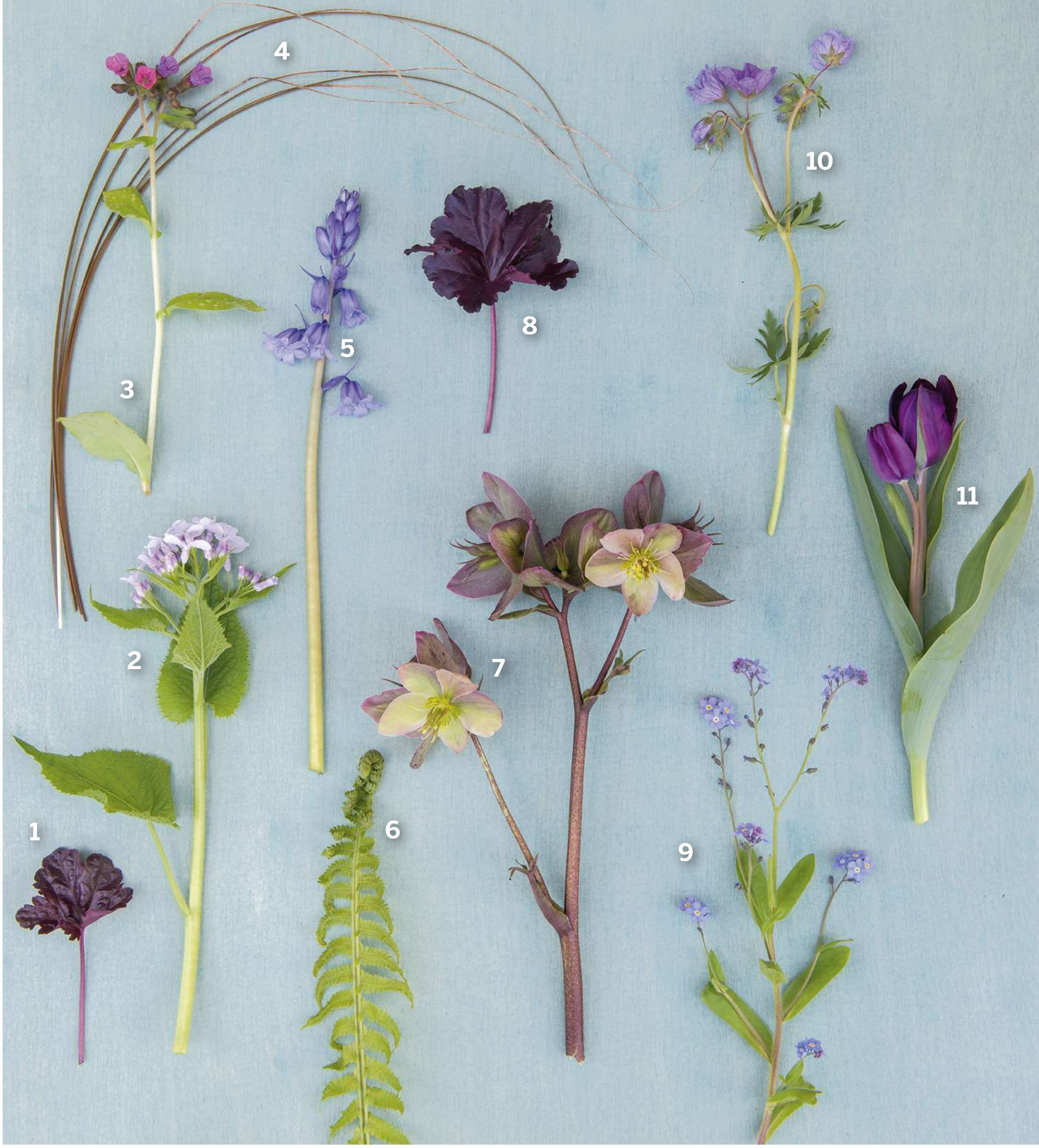
7 *Helleborus x ericsmithii* 'Pirouette' Great colour and long flowering. Good for sun and dappled shade. 40cm. USDA 5a-9b.

8 *Heuchera* 'Rachel' A good, dark cultivar that goes well with *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart'. 50cm. RHS H6.

9 *Myosotis sylvatica* Forget-me-knot seeds itself everywhere, but can easily be removed. A must alongside tulips. 30cm.

10 *Geranium tuberosum* Finely cut leaves appear in winter, followed by striking flowers in spring. Needs a dry, sunny spot. 30cm. RHS H4, USDA 6a-10b.

11 *Tulipa* 'Black Hero' One of Jacqueline's favourites. It perennialises well. 60cm.



2 Pretty in pink

1 *Myosotis sylvatica* 'Rosea' Charming alternative to the more common blue forget-me-not cultivars. 30cm.

2 *Tulipa* 'Flaming Springgreen' Glorious viridiflora tulip. Looks good in the borders or as a cut flower. 45cm.

3 Foliage of *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart' Beautifully scented leaves and delicate, pale-pink flowers. Good in shade. 50cm. USDA 4a-9b.

4 *G. macrorrhizum* 'Spessart' (see above).

5 *T.* 'Jacqueline' Strong, tall, hot-pink cultivar that comes back year after year. 60cm.

6 *Allium neapolitanum* Likes full sun where it will naturalise well. 40cm. USDA 7a-9b.

7 *Allium triquetrum* Be careful where you plant this three-corned leek as it can be very aggressive. 40cm.

8 Leaves of *Helleborus* x *hybridus* Flowers from February to April but the leaves last all year. 45cm. USDA 5a-9b.

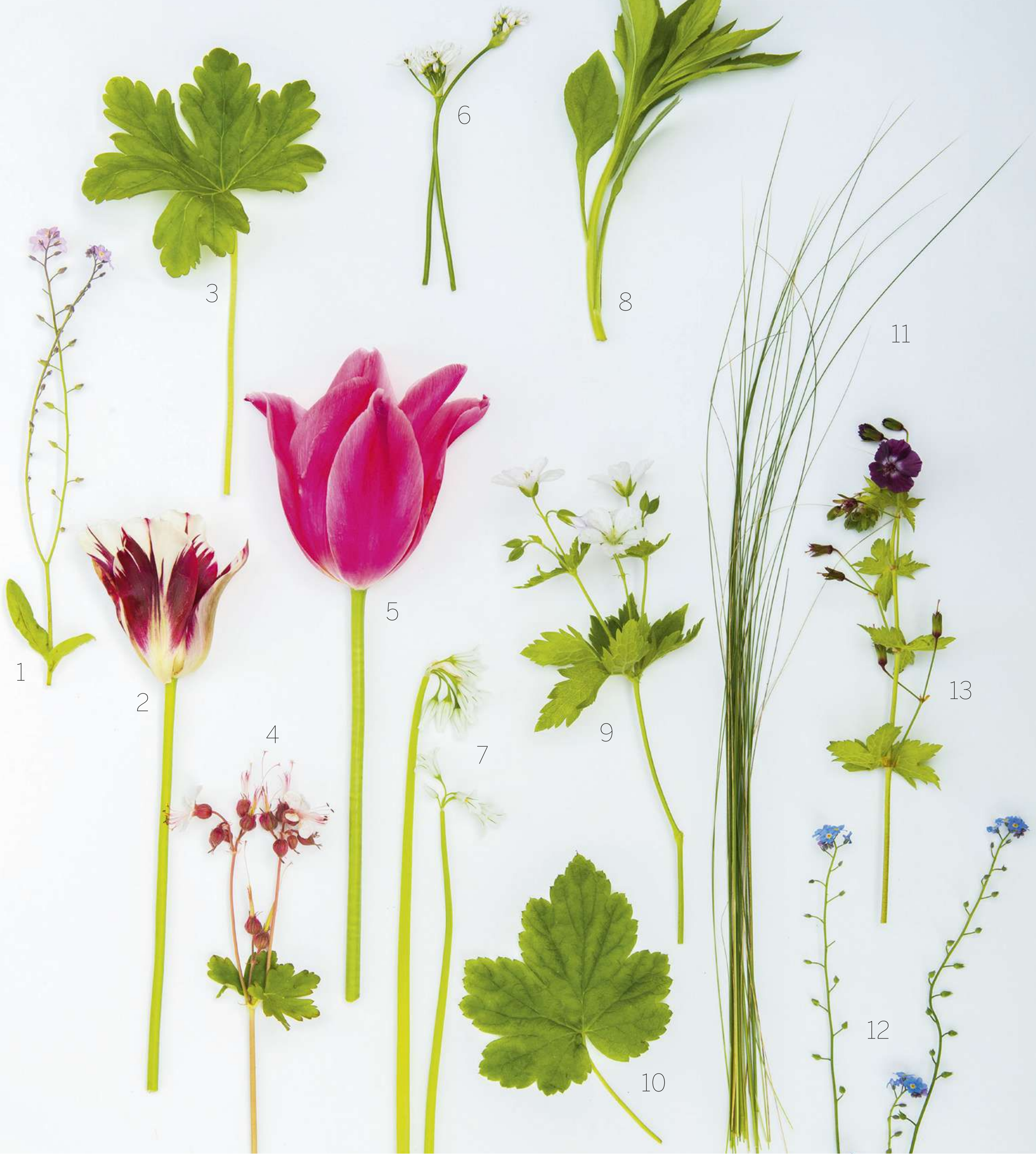
9 *Geranium sylvaticum* 'Album' Snow-white, saucer-shaped flowers that light up a shady area. 70cm. AGM. RHS H7.

10 Leaves of *G. sylvaticum* 'Album' (see above).

11 *Nassella tenuissima* Upright, tufty grass that looks wonderful intermingled with perennials. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

12 *Myosotis sylvatica* (see 9 on opposite page).

13 *Geranium phaeum* 'Little Boy' Lovely but beware that it can seed everywhere. 60cm.



*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

3 Mellow yellows

1 Smyrnium perfoliatum
A glorious yellow that seems to hold light within it. 1.2m

2 Ranunculus psilostachys
"Pretty but spreads terribly," says Jacqueline. 35cm.

3 *Tulipa* 'Ballerina'
A gorgeous, rich orange contrasting well with its grey-green foliage. 60cm. AGM. RHS H6.

4 *Erysimum* 'Spice Island'
A nice, bushy wallflower that is long flowering, sometimes from April–November. Prefers sun. 75cm.

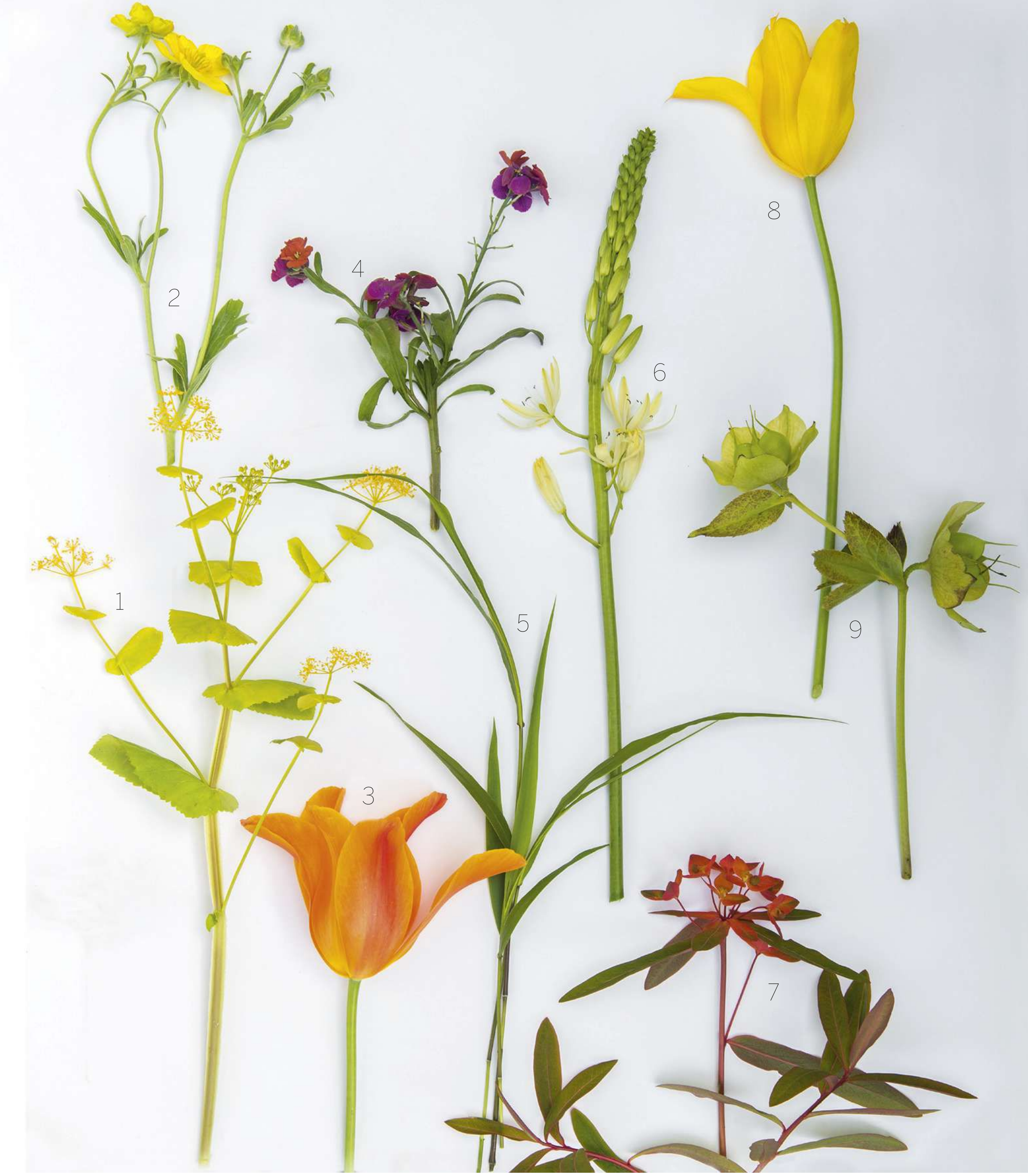
5 Hakonechloa macra
Grass forming bright green hummocks that add movement to a border. 35cm. AGM. USDA 5a-9b.

6 *Camassia leichtlinii* 'Sacajawea' An unusual cream-coloured camassia with variegated leaves. 90cm. USDA 3a-9b.

7 *Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fireglow' A beautiful burnt orange colour, although fertile soils can allow it to grow tall when it can be prone to flopping. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-10b.

8 *T.* 'Jewel of Spring'
Luminous bowl-shaped yellow flowers. 60cm.

9 Helleborus x hybridus
Semi-evergreen perennial; tolerates partial shade. 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.



4 Pale and interesting

1 ***Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart'** (see page 41).

2 ***Melica nutans*** A lovely early grass, but a vigorous self-seeder. Brown and cream flower spikes from late spring to summer. 50cm.

3 ***Cardamine heptaphylla*** Produces clumps of lovely flowers in April. 30cm. USDA 3a-8b.

4 ***Rhododendron* 'Cunningham's White'** Mauve buds open into white flowers. Jacqueline, has added ericaceous compost to her clay soil to provide the preferred acidic conditions. 2m. RHS H6.

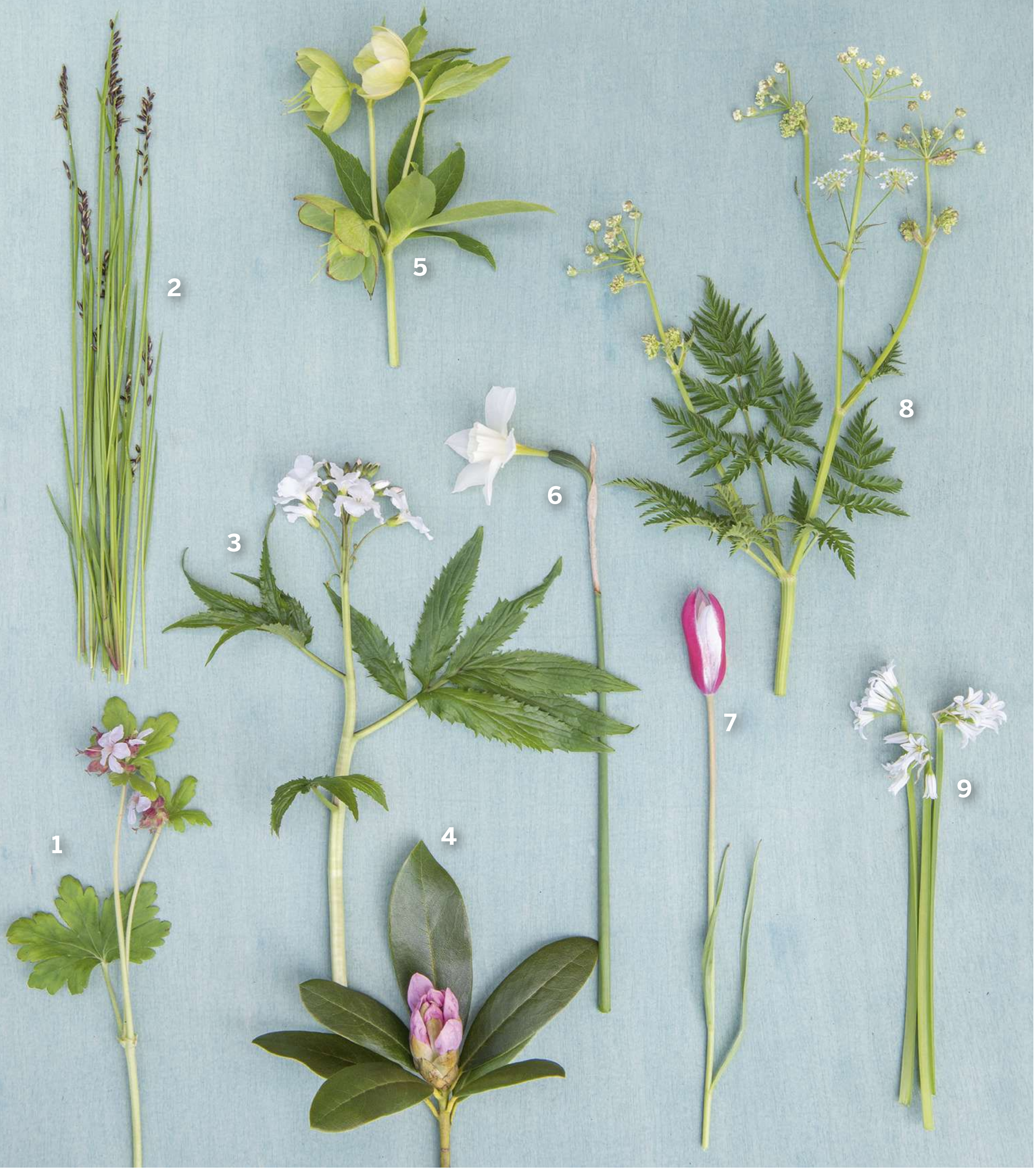
5 ***Helleborus* x *hybridus* seedling** (see page 41).

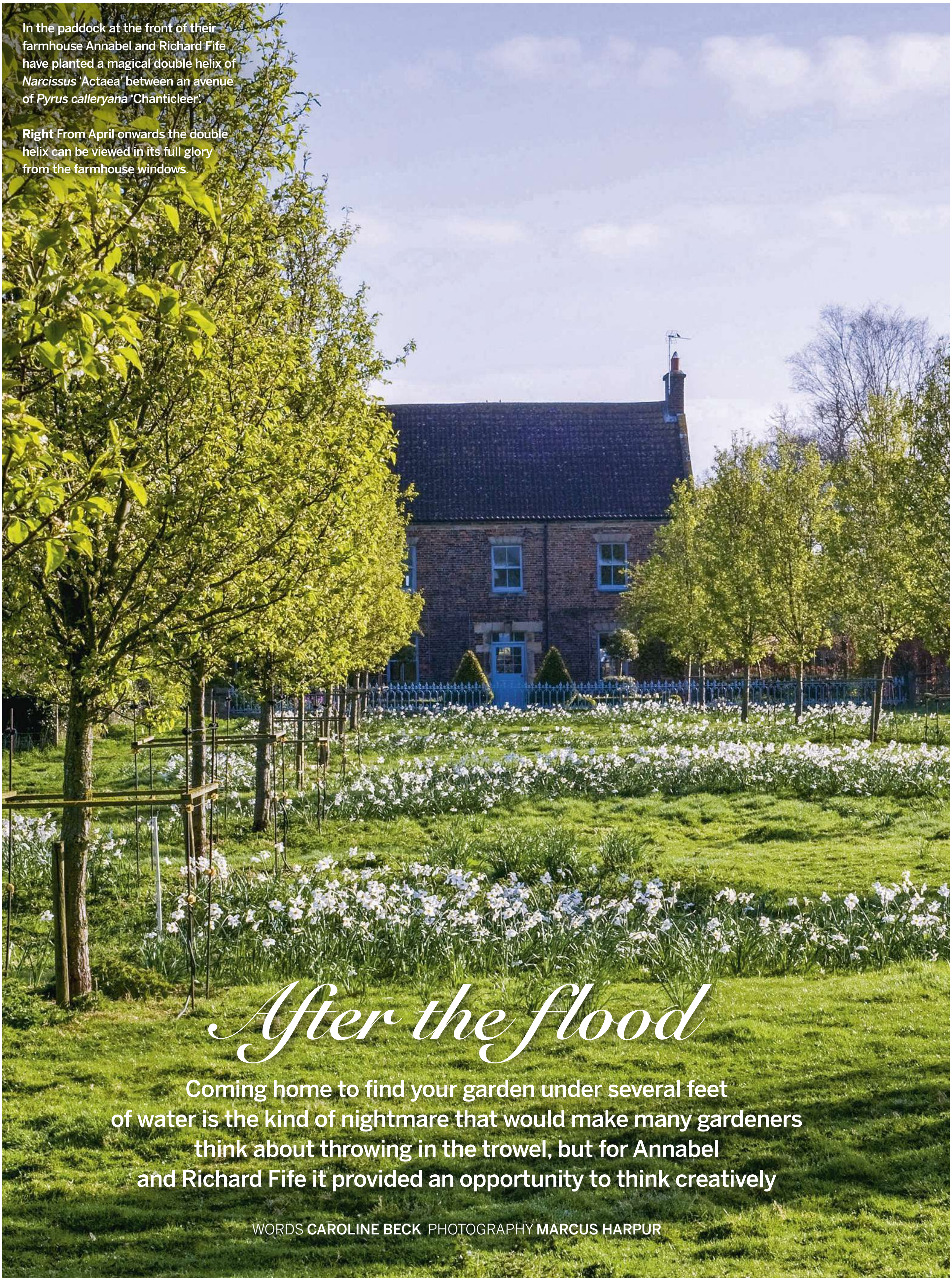
6 ***Narcissus* 'Sailboat'** Very strong narcissus that naturalises well. Good for dappled shade. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6.

7 ***Tulipa* 'Peppermintstick'** Lovely, elegant tulip. Give it a sunny, well-drained spot and it will perennialise well. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6.

8 ***Anthriscus sylvestris*** Large heads of tiny, creamy white flowers billow above delicate, fern-like foliage, adding airiness to the border. 1m. RHS H5.

9 ***Allium triquetrum*** (see page 41).





In the paddock at the front of their farmhouse Annabel and Richard Fife have planted a magical double helix of *Narcissus* 'Actaea' between an avenue of *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'.

Right From April onwards the double helix can be viewed in its full glory from the farmhouse windows.

After the flood

Coming home to find your garden under several feet of water is the kind of nightmare that would make many gardeners think about throwing in the trowel, but for Annabel and Richard Fife it provided an opportunity to think creatively

WORDS **CAROLINE BECK** PHOTOGRAPHY **MARCUS HARPUR**

In brief

Name Langton Farm.
What A country farmhouse garden bordered by the River Swale.
Where Near Northallerton in North Yorkshire.
Size The garden is an acre, with the paddock another four acres.
Soil Alluvial soil, very free-draining; extremely favourable to bulbs.
Climate Temperate with an average rainfall of around 70cm per year.
Hardiness rating USDA 8b.

"If anyone thought I was mad, no one dared say it; it focussed my attention away from the dehumidifiers"

The impulses for making a garden are many and various, but catastrophic flooding has to be one of the wilder ones. Annabel Fife has spent almost 20 years creating a garden around the old farmhouse from where her husband Richard's family have farmed for a century, but one day three and a half years ago she came home to see her garden submerged under swirling brown water. At that point many gardeners would have given up.

The nearby river, apart from that one episode of recklessness, has mainly been a blessing. It provides the sound and focus to the garden and deposits the rich, free-draining alluvial soil that is excellent for bulbs, which enjoy the early spring warmth and lack of waterlogging in the winter. Sometimes the soil is a bit too accommodating. "I wish someone had told me to deadhead my alliums," says Annabel, "because now they grow like grass."

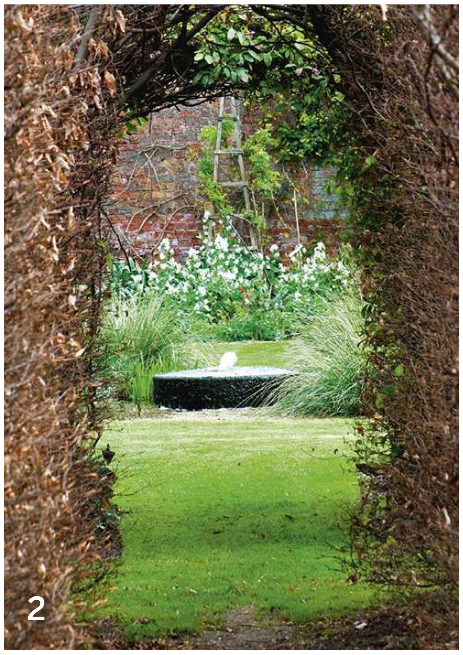
When the couple moved to the farm in 1997 the land surrounding it was mainly a working space – a concrete yard, a vegetable patch and a rather utilitarian lawn surrounded by shrubs – but Annabel wanted symmetry and coherence. She left the garden alone until her children had stopped using it as a football pitch. Having studied interior design, Annabel already knew about space and form but now she started to learn about plants from RHS Garden Harlow Carr.

She began by transforming the utilitarian lawn into an intimate walled garden with a circular lawn surrounded by a densely planted mixed border. Then she started to plan the rest of the garden, seeking out sheltered places, watching the trajectory of the sun, learning where it arrived at the end of the day so she could "warm her bones", and establishing long views framed by evergreen hedging, but always with her eye on the river.

That river, the Swale, is a turbulent upland stretch of water but by the time it reaches the flatter lands of Northallerton it has shaken off much of its restlessness. Unless, that is, there's heavy rainfall upstream on the Yorkshire moors, which is what happened on 26 September 2012 when the water rose, and carried on rising. After the initial shock, Annabel felt compelled either to move away or do something positive, even if it was displacement activity. She knew how well bulbs did in her light soil and a plan emerged.

One month after the flood Annabel and her husband went out to the paddock with canes and string and traced a fluid, interlocking pattern like a double helix – one she'd photographed five years earlier in the gardens of Villa d'Este near Pompeii. Then they planted ribbons of 8,000 *Narcissus* 'Actaea' in the grass snaking through the pear trees, their own answer to the river. "If anyone thought I was mad, no one dared say it," says Annabel. "It certainly focussed my attention away from the dehumidifiers."

Now each February, when the night frost rises from the river, she looks out of her bedroom window and sees their ghostly pattern in the grass as they begin to appear, leaf first, flowering slowly from April onwards, then coming in a great rush illuminating the paddock with their white light. But what about all the deadheading to ensure they come up every year? "I used to ▷



1 Four cone-shaped *Prunus laurocerasus* 'Otto Luyken', sheltered beneath the shade of a *Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis', mark the edge of the paddock. Within the nearby box parterre white tulips surround a lollipop-shaped *Ilex aquifolium* 'Silver Queen'.

2 An arch cut into a beech hedge provides an intriguing glimpse into the walled garden where a mass planting of *Lunaria annua* var. *albiflora* brightens a red-brick wall.

3 Close to the house clipped yew cones and box balls provide a formal counterpoint to the loose clumps of *Stipa gigantea* 'Gold Fontaene' that surrounds a bowl-shaped fountain.

4 A shady arbour offers a quiet place to enjoy the calm of the walled garden. Four *Malus* 'Butterball' trees break up the circular lawn, surrounded by a mixed border.

5 More clipped yew cones and box balls punctuate the mixed planting of hellebores, muscari and sedum in the walled garden alongside a young *Sorbus pseudohupehensis*.

6 Bulbs thrive in the garden's alluvial soil. Here Annabel has naturalised *Tulipa* 'China Pink' with a pheasant's eye narcissus to echo white blossom of the crab apple trees.

6

Tulip choices

Annabel uses plenty of tulips to add colour in spring. In the tall grass to the front of the house she's naturalised *Tulipa* 'China Pink', alongside sky-blue camassias, cowslips and some scented pheasant's eye narcissi. Nearer the house she grows several cultivars in pots using 90cm alder twigs with some soft twine woven around to protect the plants from swirling spring winds. This spring she's chosen *T*. 'Sapporo', for its soft, butter colour, *T*. 'Shirley', which has delicate lilac veining on a white background, and *T*. 'La Belle Époque', a stunning, coffee-apricot, double tulip, which she has teamed with *T.* 'Spring Green' to balance the colour.

4

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▷ do it painstakingly by hand but now Richard, my husband, takes a thin cane and swipes the heads off before they get too soft," she says.

The river hasn't chased Annabel away and, although the flood frightened and depressed her, the spring garden blazed the year after, demonstrating just how tough and tenacious bulbs are, despite their apparent fragility. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Great Langton, Northallerton,
North Yorkshire DL7 0TA.
Tel 01609 748446.
Open By appointment only, April – September, under the NGS for groups of ten or more. Annabel takes commissions for garden design. Contact her at **annabelfife@fsmail.net**

12 of Annabel's favourite spring plants

1 *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'
A columnar pear tree with masses of scented white flowers in spring. Its glossy leaves turn a rich, coppery red well into autumn. Prefers well-drained soil. 12m. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a†.

2 *Prunus tenella* 'Fire Hill'
A compact, deciduous shrub with narrow, glossy leaves and carmine pink flowers that open when the leaves emerge in early spring. Moist but well-drained soil. 1.5m. RHS H7.

3 *Malus* x *robusta* 'Red Sentinel'
Pure-white blossom in the spring is followed by crimson fruit in autumn, which lasts well into the winter. 8m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

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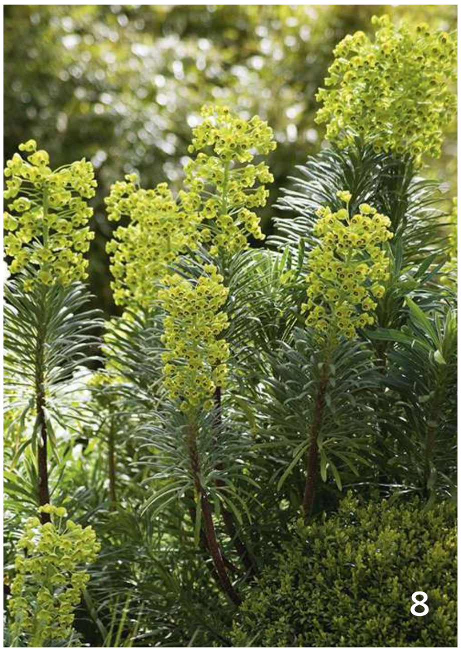
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1 MARIANNE MAJERUS. 3 GARY K SMITH / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. 4 DANIREN / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. 11 JOHN GLOVER / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO. 12 PHOTOSHOT LICENSE LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

4 *Narcissus* 'Actaea'
A scented, pure-white daffodil with an inner, red-rimmed yellow cup. Excellent for naturalising in grass and flowers a month earlier than the classic pheasant's eye narcissus. 45cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

5 *Tulipa* 'Sapporo'
An easy-to-grow, lily-flowered tulip. Its ivory to yellow flowers gradually fade to white. Good for adding calm to an energetic colour scheme and makes an excellent cut flower. 50cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

6 *Lunaria annua* var. *albiflora*
A white form of the old-fashioned biennial. Known as honesty because of its transparent seed cases through which the seeds are visible. The fragrant flowers are good for early pollinators. 90cm. AGM. RHS H7.

7 *Ilex aquifolium* 'Silver Queen'
A dense, evergreen small tree or large shrub. The emerging variegated leaves are dark green with a cream margin edged with pink. Illuminates an early spring garden. 10m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

8 *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*
An evergreen perennial with lime-green to yellow flowers. Good for the early spring garden although care is needed as some people are allergic to the milky sap. 50cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

9 *Buxus sempervirens*
This classic box plant has been used for centuries in formal gardens and is famed for its razor-sharp good looks, although box blight is an increasing problem. 5m. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

10 *Tulipa* 'China Pink'
As its name suggests, this is a delicately coloured Lily-flowered tulip. Plant deep, about 10cm, and add grit to the planting hole to prevent it becoming waterlogged over winter. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

11 *Prunus* x *subhirtella* 'Autumnalis Rosea'
A small, bushy, deciduous tree whose pale-pink blossoms emerge during mild periods any time from autumn to spring. Good autumn foliage. 8m. RHS H6, USDA 6b-7a.

12 *Myosotis sylvatica*
Forget-me-not is the cheerful sky-blue biennial no spring garden should be without. It's easy to grow, but pull out unwanted seedlings in the autumn otherwise it can take over. 30cm. RHS H5, USDA 7b-8a.

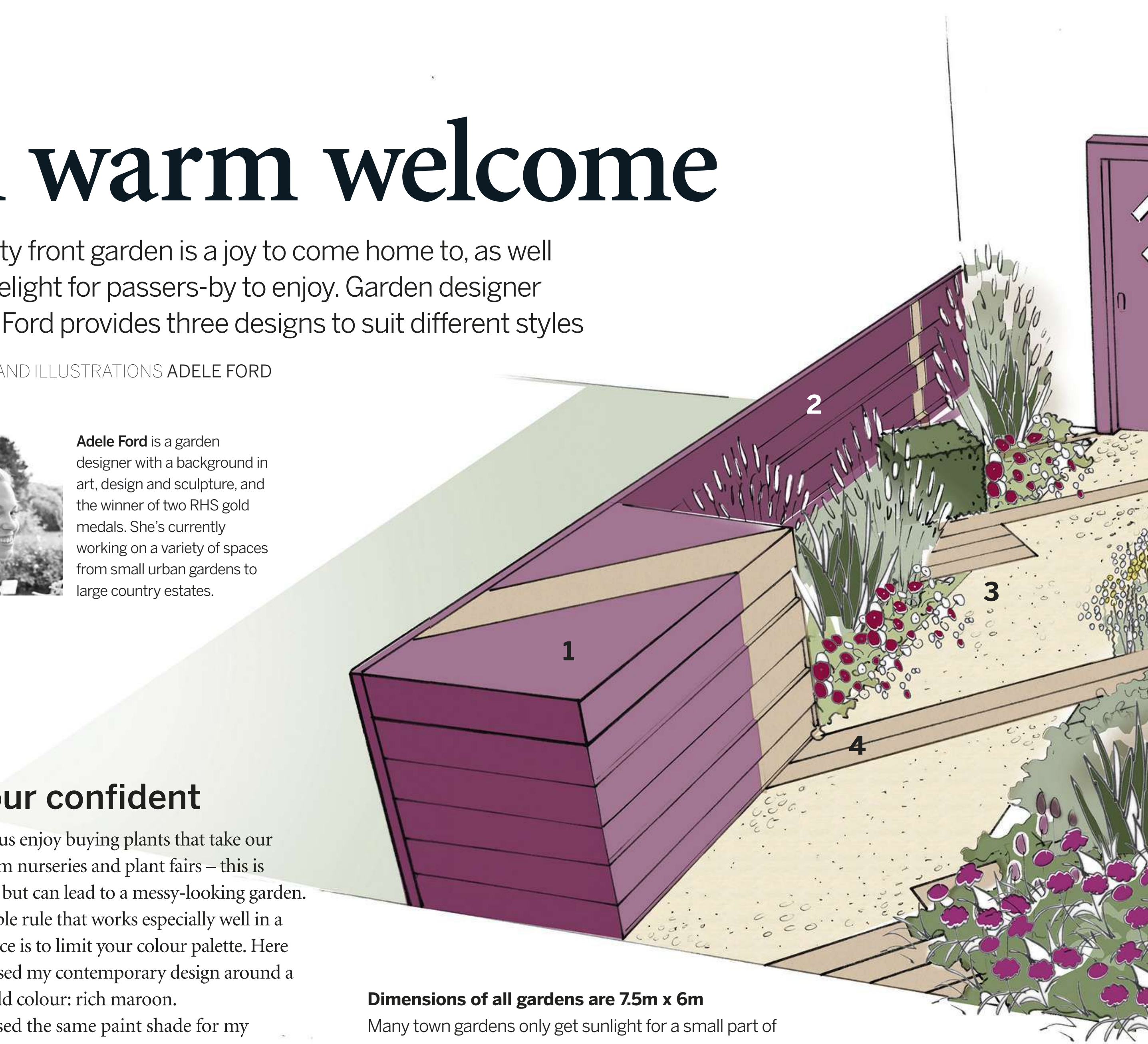
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

A warm welcome

A pretty front garden is a joy to come home to, as well as a delight for passers-by to enjoy. Garden designer Adele Ford provides three designs to suit different styles

WORDS AND ILLUSTRATIONS ADELE FORD

Adele Ford is a garden designer with a background in art, design and sculpture, and the winner of two RHS gold medals. She's currently working on a variety of spaces from small urban gardens to large country estates.



Colour confident

Many of us enjoy buying plants that take our fancy from nurseries and plant fairs – this is great fun but can lead to a messy-looking garden. One simple rule that works especially well in a small space is to limit your colour palette. Here I have based my contemporary design around a single bold colour: rich maroon.

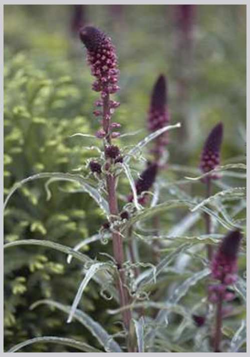
I've used the same paint shade for my boundary fences, door and window frames and bin store. From this starting point I selected my plants to complement the colour scheme. I have chosen a handful of similarly coloured plants that flower at different times throughout the year, and have softened the strong maroon with light, floaty grasses and used hard landscaping in pale colours.

Colour really changes the mood of a space, so choose one that will complement your house or street. Remember to keep it simple: a few colours and a few materials is all you need to create a contemporary, stylish front garden.

This design also uses long parallel lines of stone paving at a 45-degree angle to give the appearance of a larger space. Using a light stone paving helps with this illusion. Try to avoid using plants of a similar height, as this will make the space feel much smaller. Height provided by the tree gives another dimension to the small space, drawing your eye up and over the garden. Select a tree that will give you more than one season of interest if it is deciduous; or good, solid structure if it is evergreen.

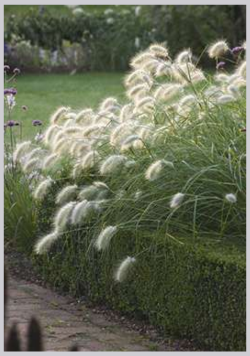
Dimensions of all gardens are 7.5m x 6m
Many town gardens only get sunlight for a small part of the day because of surrounding houses. When choosing plants for your front garden, remember to check that they are correct for your aspect and soil type.

Key plants



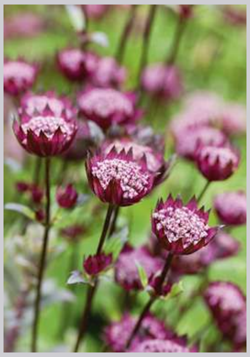
MATT ANKER / GAP PHOTOS

***Lysimachia atropurpurea* 'Beaujolais'**
Striking flower spikes on long, slender stems with attractive silvery rosettes. Flowers May to September. Can be grown in a pot. 70cm. USDA 4a-9b[†].



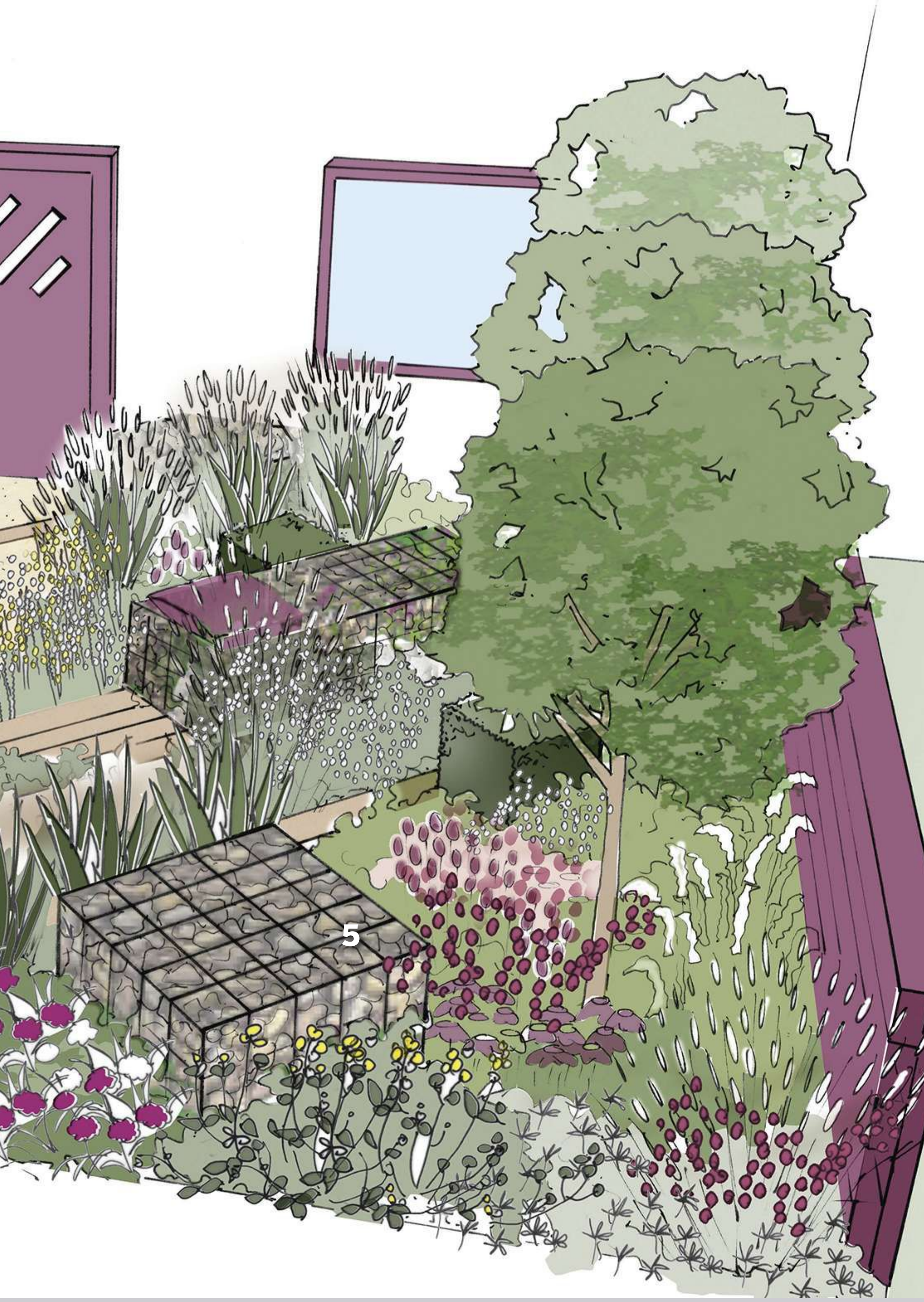
CLIVE NICHOLS / GAP PHOTOS

Pennisetum villosum
A deciduous, perennial grass with greeny-white flowers in midsummer. It looks great all year and softens up areas of hard landscaping. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H3, USDA 9a-10b.



NICOLA STOCKEN / GAP PHOTOS

***Astrantia* 'Hadspen Blood'**
Dark-red flowers with near-black bracts stand out above the dark-green, deeply cut foliage. The more sun it gets, the darker the colour will be. 70cm. RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.



1 Storage

Cool, contemporary garden designs can be spoilt by ugly bins, so consider a stylish storage to hide them away. This can be painted to fit in with your colour theme.

2 Fences

Even the simplest of garden fences can take on a new life with colour. Choose a strong shade you love then source your key plants and accessories to tie in with this theme. Try horizontal slatted panels instead of regular fencing, as these look wonderful with plants growing up and through them.

3 Permeable paths

Use permeable surfaces to allow rainwater to gradually soak back into the water table, rather than run off straight into already strained drains.

4 Plank paving

You can find plank paving in a range of natural stone finishes, all of which add a contemporary feel to a garden. Here it's been laid at a 45-degree angle, which breaks up the straight path and planting areas, and helps to create the illusion of a much wider space.

5 Gabions

Gabions can be filled with all kinds of materials, such as coloured glass bottles, stones, wood or shells, to provide a strong, year-round focal point in a front garden.

SARAH CUTTLE / GAP PHOTOS

***Hebe* 'Red Edge'**
This evergreen shrub with pale-mauve flowers makes a great informal hedge. It looks fantastic with frost and copes well in coastal areas. 50cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

***Malus toringo* 'Scarlett'**
A small, pretty crab apple tree with pink blossom in spring, leaves that change from purple to green to a fiery red in autumn, and masses of tiny red fruit. 4m. AGM. RHS H6.

ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS

Geranium phaeum
With small, deep maroon-black flowers from spring to summer, this will thrive even in damp or dry shade and is fantastic for ground cover. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

More planting options

Perennial

- *Echinacea purpurea* 'Virgin' Large, pure-white, fragrant flowers from late June until early October. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

Shrubs and hedging

- *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Wim's Red' Scented flower clusters turn from white to pink to rich crimson and last from June to October. 2m. USDA 3a-8a.
- *Ilex crenata* A holly that can be tightly clipped. 5m.
- *Viburnum tinus* 'Lucidum' A vigorous *Viburnum* that can be trained as a tree. Ornamental and easily managable. Black-blue berries follow fragrant, white flowers. 3m. USDA 7a-10b.

Other plants

- *Anemanthele lessoniana* An evergreen grass that turns bronze-gold in autumn. 1m. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 8a-10b.
- *Clematis* 'Royal Velours' A fully hardy, vigorous clematis with dark-purple flowers July to September. 4m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.
- *Dryopteris affinis* 'Cristata' This fern keeps its fronds most of the winter. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

Shabby chic

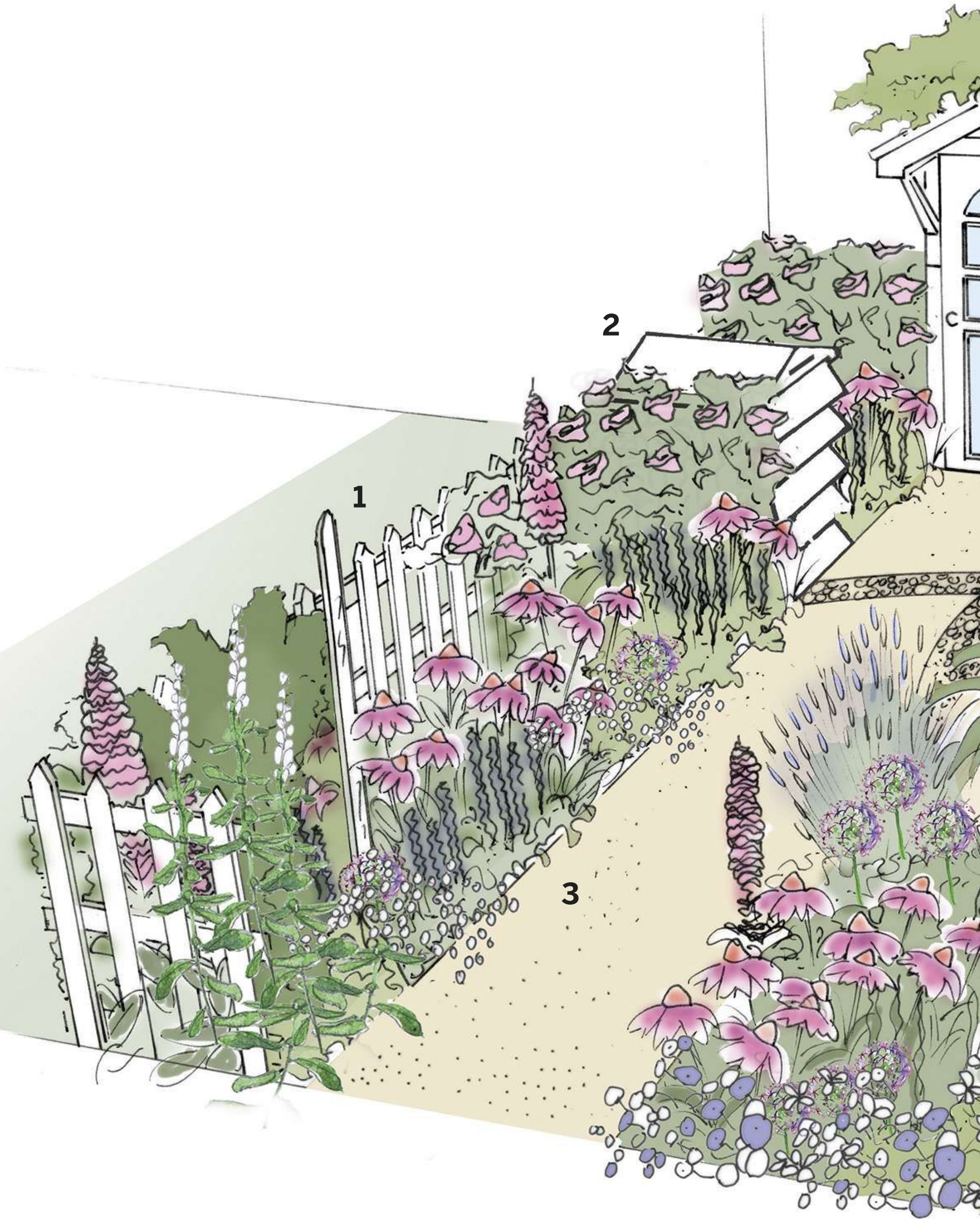
Retro and vintage furnishings are on trend in interior design at the moment, and this design brings elements of that fashionable style to an outside room.

A classic, white picket fence, bistro-style metal tables and chairs, mirrors, antiques and trinkets set the theme off perfectly. Traditional, cottage-garden planting with pretty pink and purple flowers, which will fill the air with clouds of scent, all add to the nostalgic atmosphere.

Rather than simply creating a space through which you pass on your way to and from the house, this indulgent design for a front garden encourages you to stop and sit for a while and perhaps enjoy a cup of tea. The idea is to create an outside room, furnished with comfortable seating and attractive lighting, in which you'll look forward to spending time.

Lighting transforms a garden – candles in oversized lanterns and twinkling fairy lights hanging from a tree or along the fence will make it a magical place to enjoy on long summer evenings.

When designing your garden, first work out the 'desire line' – the route you are most likely to use – then have some fun. Here I have used circles to create the paths and patios and the planting areas. Alternatively, you could use a favourite pattern from a piece of fabric or an image to inspire you.



Key plants

JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS

***Digitalis purpurea*
Excelsior Group**
Large, tubular flowers in pink, purple and creamy-white with spotted throats. Flowers May to July and self-seeds happily. 2m. USDA 4a-8b.

ROBERT MABIC / GAP PHOTOS

Stipa tenuissima
A semi-evergreen grass that looks fantastic among brightly coloured perennials. In autumn the grass and its flowers turn a blonde-buff. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.

RON EVANS / GAP PHOTOS

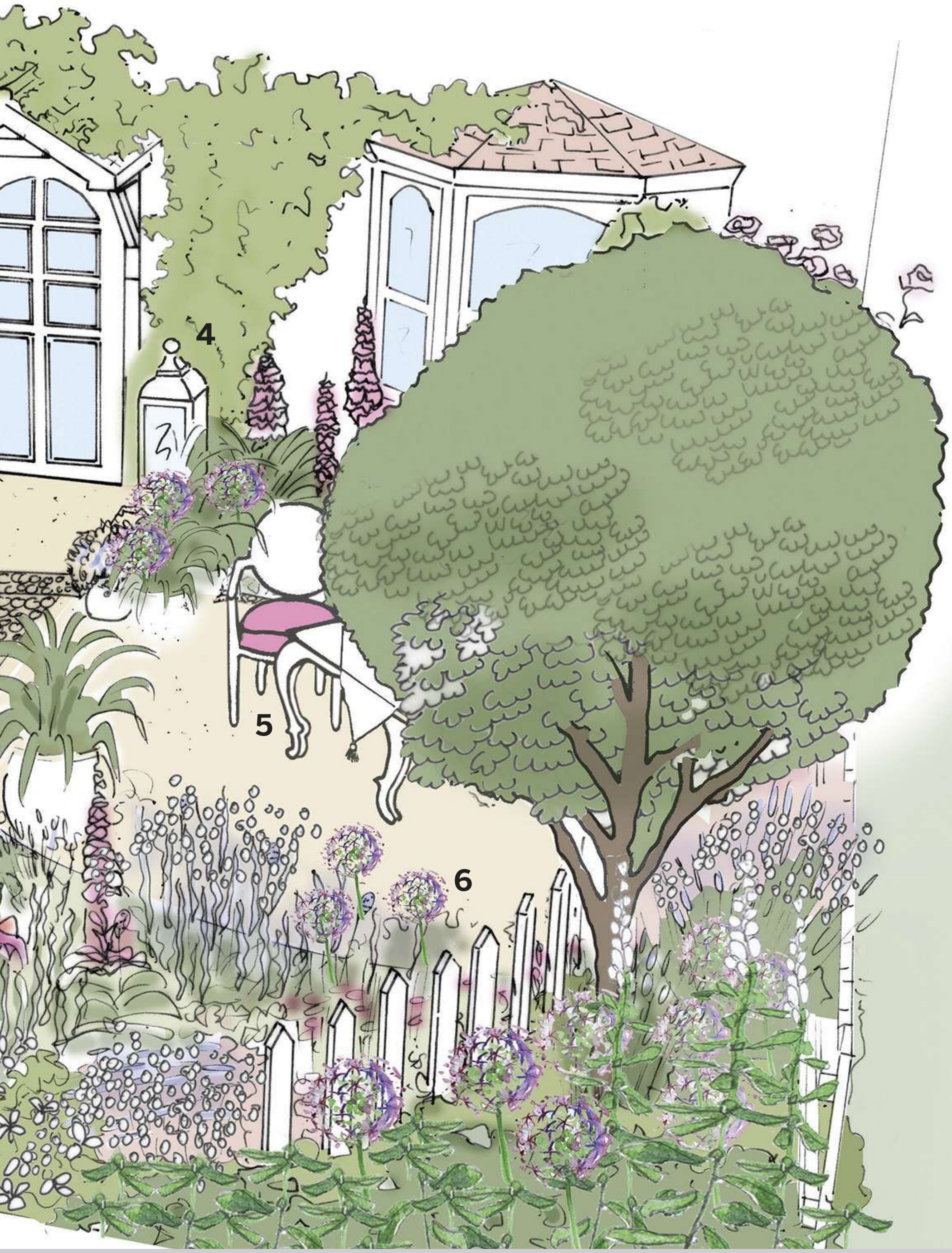
***Prunus* 'Amanogawa'**
One of the prettiest spring flowering trees with lots of large, fragrant blossoms. It has an upright habit so is ideal for narrow gardens. 8m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-7b.

JONATHAN BUCKLEY / GAP PHOTOS

***Daphne* x *transatlantica*
Eternal Fragrance (= 'Blafra')**
A compact, fully hardy, semi-evergreen shrub with heavily scented flowers from April until October. 1m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

MARIANNE MAJERUS / MMGI

***Rosa* Gertrude Jekyll
(= 'Ausbord')**
This repeat-flowering rose is my absolute favourite, and has a divine, old-fashioned fragrance. 1.5m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.



1 Fencing

Plants along the front garden fence will be enjoyed by you, your neighbours and passers-by. Picket fencing allows plants to meander through and along the boundary.

2 Beehive storage box

The perfect shape for this style of garden and can be used for storage or hiding deliveries. Beehive compost bins are also available.

3 Mosaic pebbles

Using bands of pebbles in areas of the paving adds texture and colour contrast, and breaks up the hard landscaping.

4 Lanterns

Adding a few lanterns, either vintage or new, by the door, on a table or hanging from a tree will add a touch of romance.

5 Furniture

Rustic bistro furniture is available in many styles and colours, and is easy to move around and store away when not needed. Add coloured cushions for a finishing touch.

6 Blur the boundaries

Fencing doesn't have to follow the straight lines of your boundary. Bringing it in slightly allows you to follow more curved patterns in your design and create new spaces to plant in. It also provides year-round height and structure that sits within your planting.

MARIANNE MAJERUS / MMGI

***Anemone x hybrida* 'Elegans'**
This vigorous perennial is ideal in partial shade at the back of a moist border and bears up to 20 flowers on each tall stem from August to October. 1.2m. AGM. RHS H7.

DAVE ZUBRASKI / GAP PHOTOS

***Echinacea purpurea* 'Rubinstern'**
This striking perennial has a long flowering period from June to October and looks great planted with grasses. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

More planting options

Perennials

- *Bergenia* 'Overture'
A fully hardy plant with striking magenta-red flowers against thick, glossy, burgundy-green leaves. 50cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.
- *Erigeron karvinskianus*
Masses of small daisies emerge white then turn pink from May to October. Will seed itself in cracks in walls and paths. 50cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 6a-9b.
- *Geranium clarkei* 'Kashmir White'
Delicate yet fully hardy, with elegant white flowers veined in pale lilac from July to October. Good ground cover. 45cm. RHS H5, USDA 5a-7b.
- *Salvia* 'Amistad'
A stunning new cultivar with black stems and purple flowers from May to October. 1.2m. RHS H4, USDA 8a-11b.
- *Libertia chilensis*
Reliable, long-lived perennial with sword-like leaves that provide attractive vertical accents. It bears white flowers from May to July. 1m. AGM. RHS H3, USDA 8a-11b.

Shrubs

- *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Sheila' (Dutch Ladies Series)
This elegant lacecap hydrangea flowers from July to September. The flowers turn blush-pink in neutral soils or bluish in acid soils. 1.2m. USDA 5a-9b.

Other plants

- *Cyclamen coum* 'Rubrum'
Beautiful marbled leaves sit below the small yet striking magenta-red flowers, a welcome sight in the new year until spring. 10cm.
- *Lonicera periclymenum* 'Rhubarb and Custard'
A new cultivar with masses of large flower clusters from June to September, and a divine scent. 2m.

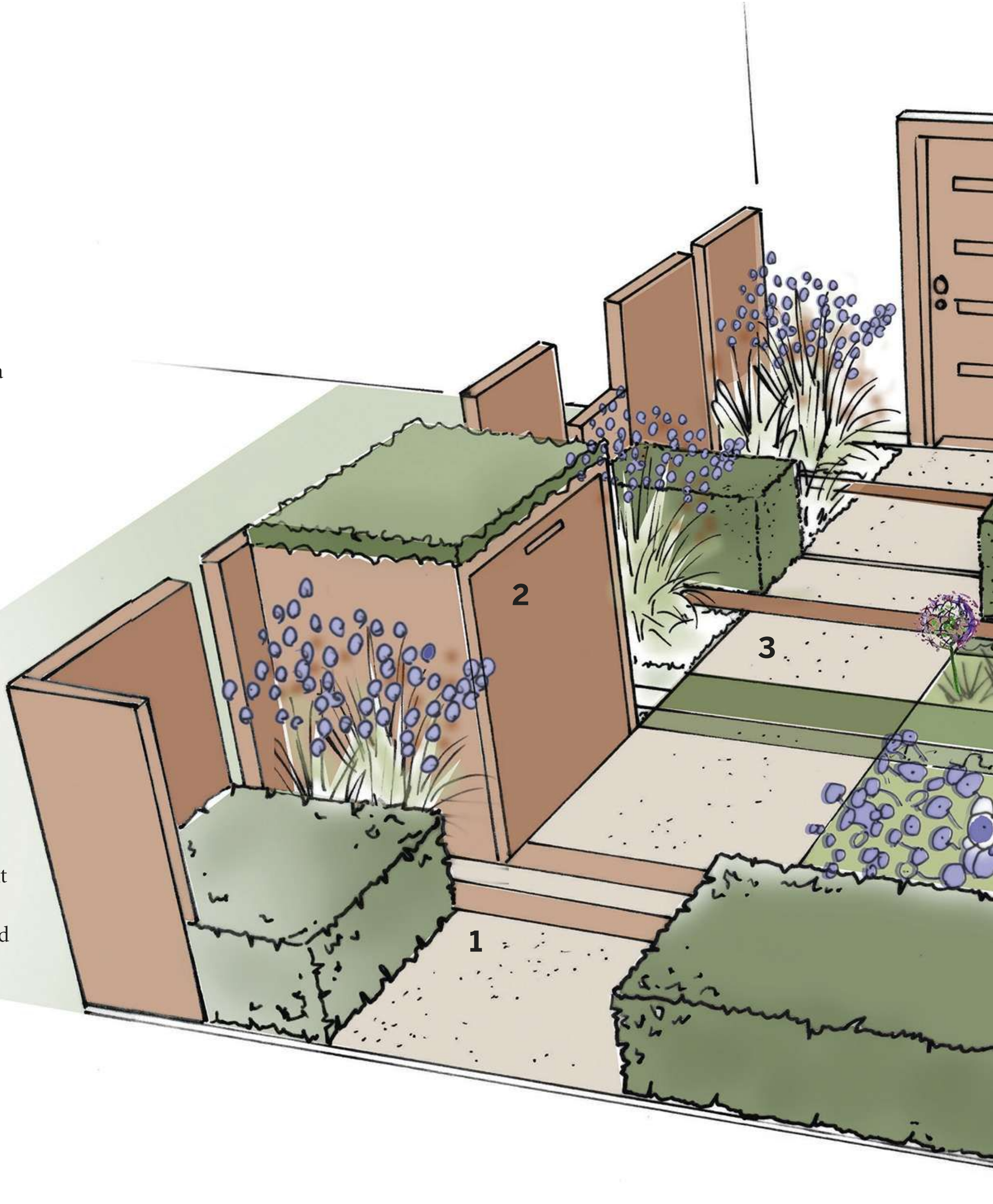
Clear and simple

For a contemporary garden, simplicity is key. This design uses only a few materials and plants and then repeats them to create a sense of unity. Maintenance is also kept to a minimum – perfect for busy lifestyles.

Corten steel is an extremely popular material both for its strength and versatility. Here it's used for the boundary fencing, edging for the planting areas as well as for retaining the paving. You could also use it to create a water feature in the form of a bowl or rill.

At the centre, a specimen multi-stemmed small tree or large shrub adds height to this largely low-level design. The best trees are those that offer year-round interest, such as *Betula ermanii* 'Grayswood Hill', *Amelanchier* x *grandiflora* 'Autumn Brilliance' and *Acer griseum*. The *Parrotia persica* used here offers both vibrant autumn foliage and attractive bark and its limbs, which stretch out in all directions, add a note of irregularity to the linear design.

Throughout the day the shadows created by the tree and the bespoke fencing will change, bringing this small garden to life. Light and shadow will also change throughout the year, subtly altering the limited colour palette. If you select other plants that work better with your garden's aspect, remember to keep the colours simple and true to your design. □



Key plants

J S SIRA / MMGI

Iris **'Dutch Chocolate'**
A new introduction with rich brown-orange, fragrant flowers in May and June. It will repeat flower in autumn after a good summer. 90cm. USDA 3a-8b.

ADRIAN BLOOM / GAP PHOTOS

Carex comans **'Frosted Curls'**
This hardy evergreen grass has dark green leaves with a creamy yellow line. It flowers in late spring to summer. 50cm. RHS H4, USDA 6a-10b.

FIONA RICE / GAP PHOTOS

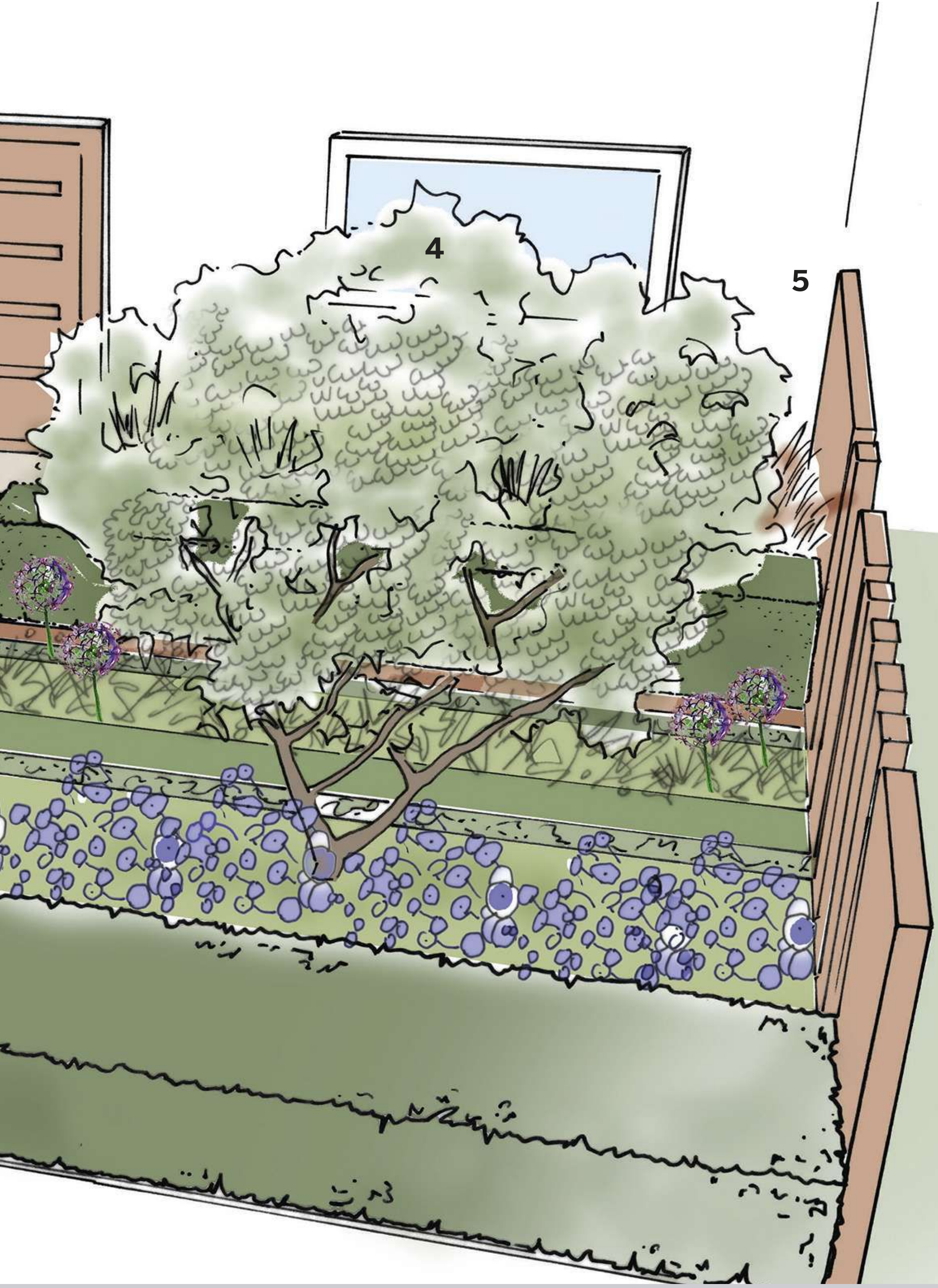
Digitalis parviflora
Flowering from early to mid summer, this fully hardy, easy-to-grow, compact foxglove bears orange-purple flowers on strong stems. 1m. RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.

HOWARD RICE / GAP PHOTOS

Polypodium vulgare
This fully hardy evergreen fern is a native of Britain, and has long dark, leathery fronds. One of the ferns that enjoys full sun or dappled shade and most soils. 1m.

A BARRA

Parrotia persica
A tree or multi-stem feature shrub with pretty bark. It flowers January to February and boasts an amazing range of autumn leaf colour. 8m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.



1 Textured paths

Using different textures on a pathway not only looks great, but the satisfying crunch of gravel adds another layer of interest. It's quite useful for security too.

2 Bike store

Many more commuters are looking to include secure bike storage space in their front gardens. This store can be adapted for different garden styles, and if topped with a sedum roof becomes a garden feature in itself.

3 Corten edging

Corten steel always adds a contemporary feel to a garden. Both strong and versatile, it is perfect for everything from edging borders and paths to creating boundary fences, fire pits, water features, sculptures and furniture.

4 Multi-stem trees

Multi-stemmed small trees look fantastic as specimen features in small spaces, providing sculptural interest from the ground upwards, without blocking too much of the view.

5 Fencing

By using different materials, colours and interesting shapes you can transform your boundary fence into a creative backdrop for planting. Here solid Corten steel panels of varying heights combine with narrower stakes in the same material to provide privacy while also allowing diffused light to reach plants.

MARK BOLTON / GAP PHOTOS

***Tulipa* 'Prinses Irene'**
This April-flowering tulip is sweetly scented on short, sturdy stems, ideal for a windy position. It makes an excellent cut flower. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-7b.

More planting options

Perennials

- *Asarum europaeum*

A fantastic hardy ground cover plant that is great for semi shade or shady areas. 15cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

- *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

This fully hardy grass gives height to a small garden. It fades to a biscuit colour for autumn and winter. Cut down in March for it to do its magic all over again. 1.8m. RHS H7, USDA 5a-9b.

- *Doodia media*

Great fern for planting under trees and shrubs or awkward little spaces. Does best in partial shade. 40cm. USDA 8b-10b.

Hedging

- *Buxus sempervirens*

Common box is by far the most popular choice for tight clipped hedging and topiary as it stays tight for months after clipping. 5m. RHS H5, USDA 6a-8b.

- *Fagus sylvatica*

An old favourite for hedging as it holds on to its golden autumn leaves throughout the winter. 25m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-7b.

Bulb

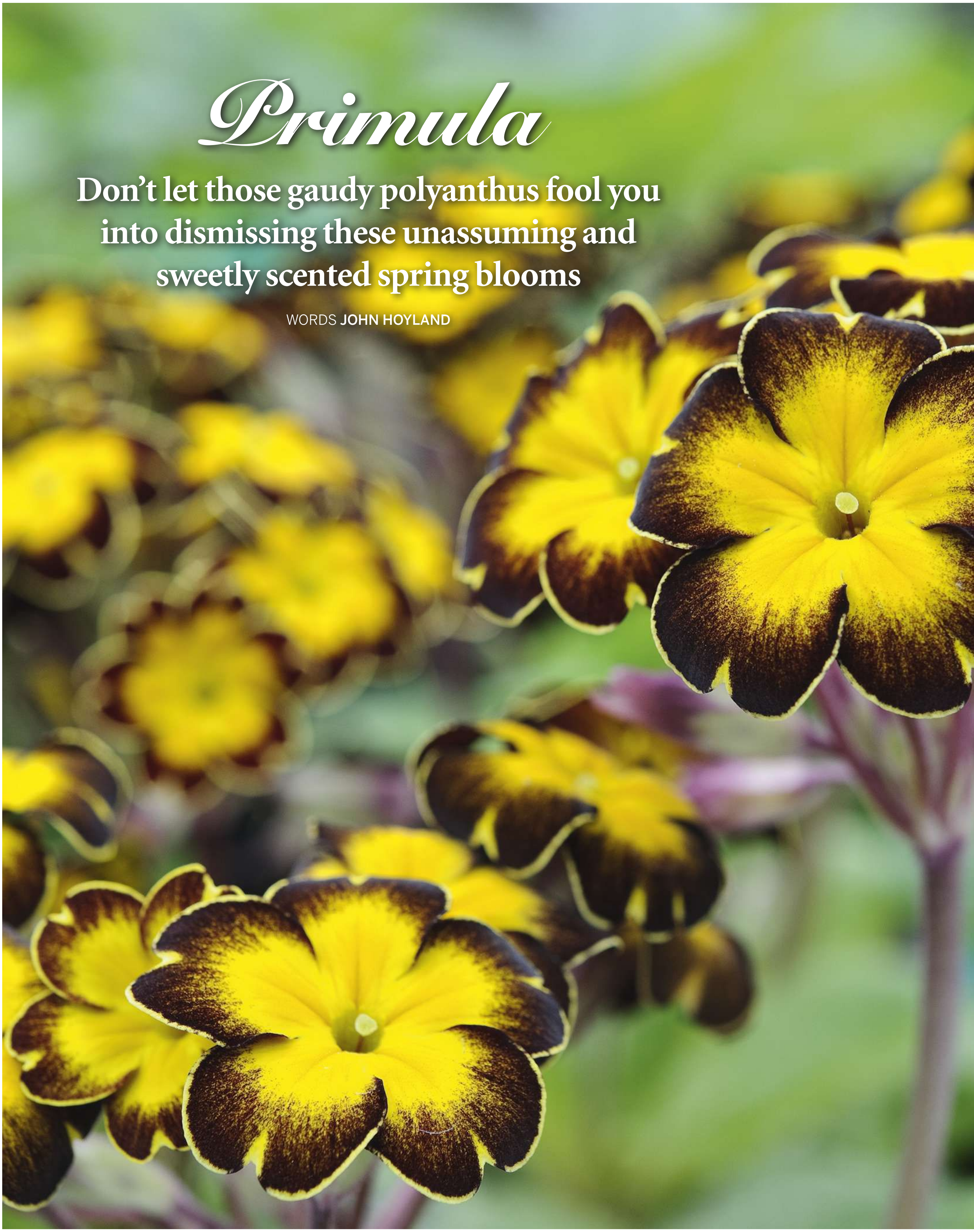
- *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus*

This scented narcissus flowers from March to May and is long lasting as a cut flower. 35cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5b-10b.

Vertical thinking

If you have very little space at ground level, then think about growing upwards instead, using climbing plants on walls or even by creating a green wall. These are ideal for greening up dark, shady areas you might otherwise ignore, and with a little imagination they can become areas of life and beauty.

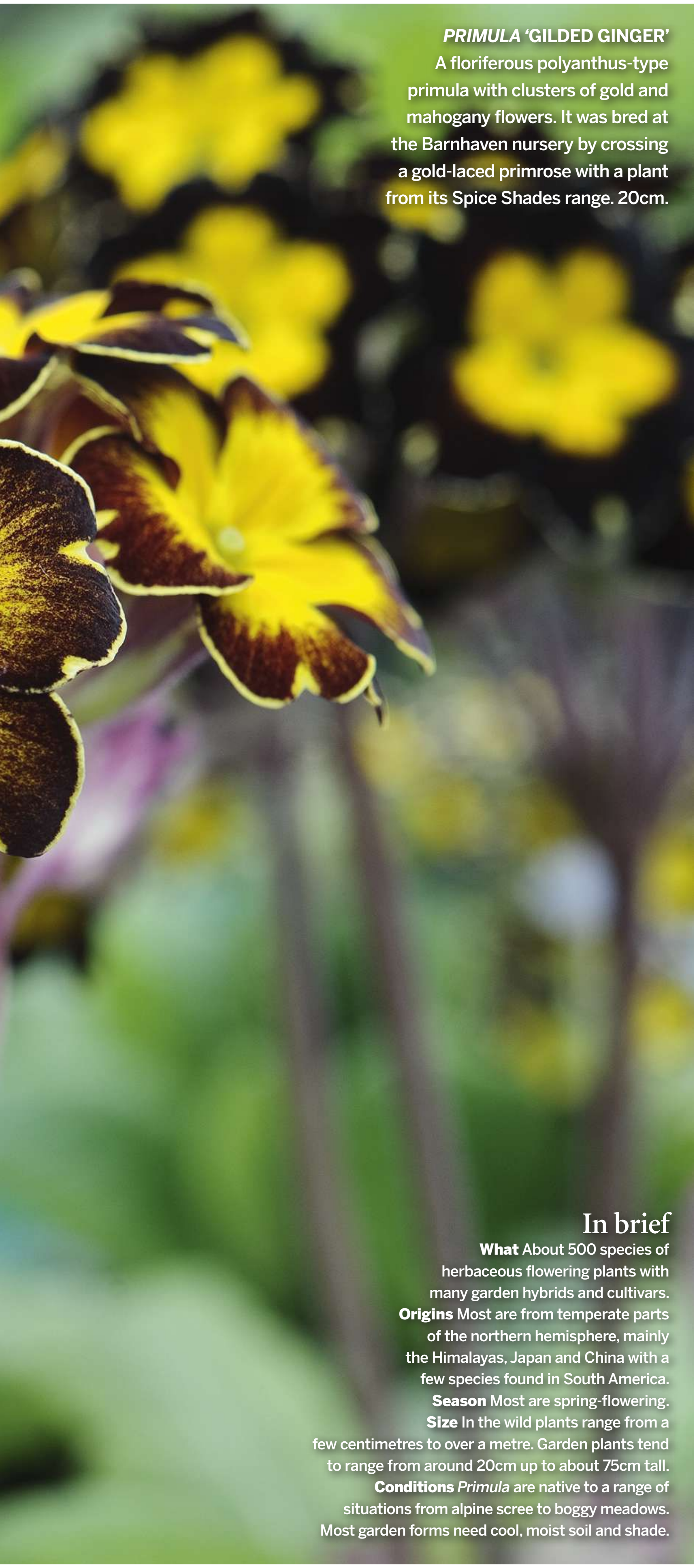
Building an archway over a garden entrance is another way of adding height to your planting scheme. If you cover this with scented and colourful flowers, such as climbing roses or clematis, you'll create a stunning entrance for your garden.



Primula

Don't let those gaudy polyanthus fool you into dismissing these unassuming and sweetly scented spring blooms

WORDS **JOHN HOYLAND**



***PRIMULA* 'GILDED GINGER'**
A floriferous polyanthus-type primula with clusters of gold and mahogany flowers. It was bred at the Barnhaven nursery by crossing a gold-laced primrose with a plant from its Spice Shades range. 20cm.

JASON INGRAM

In brief

What About 500 species of herbaceous flowering plants with many garden hybrids and cultivars.
Origins Most are from temperate parts of the northern hemisphere, mainly the Himalayas, Japan and China with a few species found in South America.
Season Most are spring-flowering.
Size In the wild plants range from a few centimetres to over a metre. Garden plants tend to range from around 20cm up to about 75cm tall.
Conditions *Primula* are native to a range of situations from alpine scree to boggy meadows. Most garden forms need cool, moist soil and shade.

John Hoyland is a plantsman and garden writer who has gardens in both southeast England and southwest France.

The Victorian botanical painter, Marianne North, travelled the British Empire studying and painting plants and flowers, becoming familiar with extraordinary, extravagant, exotic flowers that would have astonished her gardening contemporaries. Yet, in spite of this, it was in the uncomplicated flowers of native plants that she found most beauty. Towards the end of her life she wrote that 'no flowers are more sweeter or more lovely than the primroses, cowslips, bluebells and violets that grow in abundance around me here'. All gardens benefit from simple, unassuming flowers and the *Primula* genus has them in abundance, together with a few flamboyant forms.

In general, *Primula* are promiscuous, fertile plants that cross pollinate with ease, producing a range of colours and flower shapes. The Elizabethans grew 'hose-in-hose' primroses, where one flower grows inside another, and 'Jack-in-the-pulpit' types, which have a ruff of green petals around the flower. These are terms that continue to be used in nursery catalogues.

Long ago, plant breeders crossed the purity of the primrose and the multiple flowers of the cowslip to produce polyanthus, those annual bedding primroses that appear on garage forecourts in early spring, prized by some for their extravagant colouring and their ability to stubbornly flower their way through British winters. It is remarkable that something so garish could be the descendant of parents so charming and elegant.

Fortunately, other breeders have raised polyanthus that retain more of the essential qualities of their parents. Gertrude Jekyll developed a strain of pale yellow and white polyanthus from a hybrid (of *P. vulgaris* and *P. veris*) she found growing in her garden in Surrey. At the other side of the world, in Oregon, USA, more systematic primula breeding was carried out from the 1930s onwards by Florence Bellis. For 30 years she produced primroses that became known

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*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ as Barnhaven strains, characterised by vigorous plants, sometimes with bronzed foliage and strongly coloured, often scented, flowers. Barnhaven primroses are now located in Brittany, France, and continue to be produced using traditional hand-pollination methods.

Bellis was also responsible for reintroducing gold-laced primroses (see previous page) into gardens. These hardy hybrids have mahogany flowers with a yellow centre and petals edged in yellow or white, as exquisite as anything fashioned by Fabergé. Despite the delicacy of their flowers, they are tough and easy to grow.

Primroses, cowslips, oxslips and their hybrids form a very small part of the genus *Primula*. Estimated at about 500 species, nearly half are native to the Himalayas and the rest concentrated in temperate regions in Europe, South America, Japan and China. Early 20th-century plant hunters introduced plants that broadened gardeners' appreciation of primulas. From a 1906 expedition to Yunnan, China, George Forrest brought back to Britain *P. bulleyana* (page 61), which quickly became popular. It's one of a group of so-called candelabra primulas that have stout stems and whorls of flowers (in this case, golden-orange) that grow at intervals along the stem. A few years later, one of Forrest's rivals, Frank Kingdon Ward, discovered another candelabra type in Burma (now Myanmar) that has magenta flowers with a bright-yellow centre. These two species and their hybrids form the basis of Candelabra Primroses seed mixes.

Kingdon Ward also introduced the giant cowslip, *P. florindae* (right above). Its stems and buds are dusted with a white powder that creates a silvery sheen. Although it resembles downy mildew, this mealy substance is not a disease. Known as farina, it is common on many species of primula and is thought to protect plants from being burnt by bright sunlight.

While there are many species of *Primula* that make great garden plants there are even more that are suitable only for growing in pots with the protection of a greenhouse or cold frame. Admire their beauty, marvel at the skill of the growers, but don't be tempted to try them in the ground. For the garden, stick to the robust and hardy species on these pages.

- John's recommendations for primulas continue over the next six pages.

AMY VONHEIM / GAP PHOTOS

PRIMULA FLORINDAE

Highly scented, pale-yellow, nodding flowers open from farinaceous buds in July, followed by attractive seedheads. Needs a deep, rich, moist soil and once established will form large colonies. 1m. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b†.

MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES

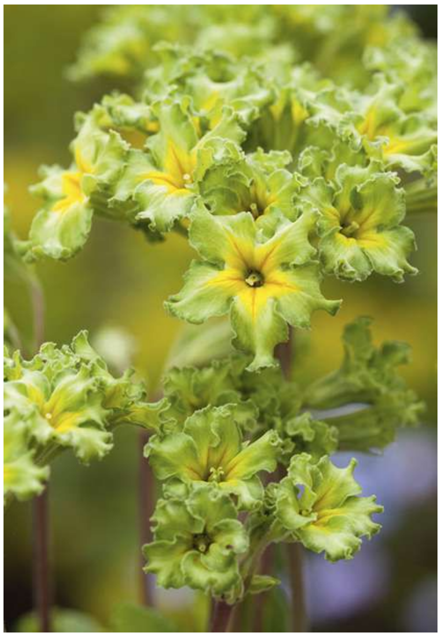
P. VULGARIS

The common British native primrose has an elegance and charm often lacking from its descendants. Its pale-yellow flowers are the perfect partner to spring bulbs. 12cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

PREMIUM STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY GMBH / ALAMY

P. ELATIOR

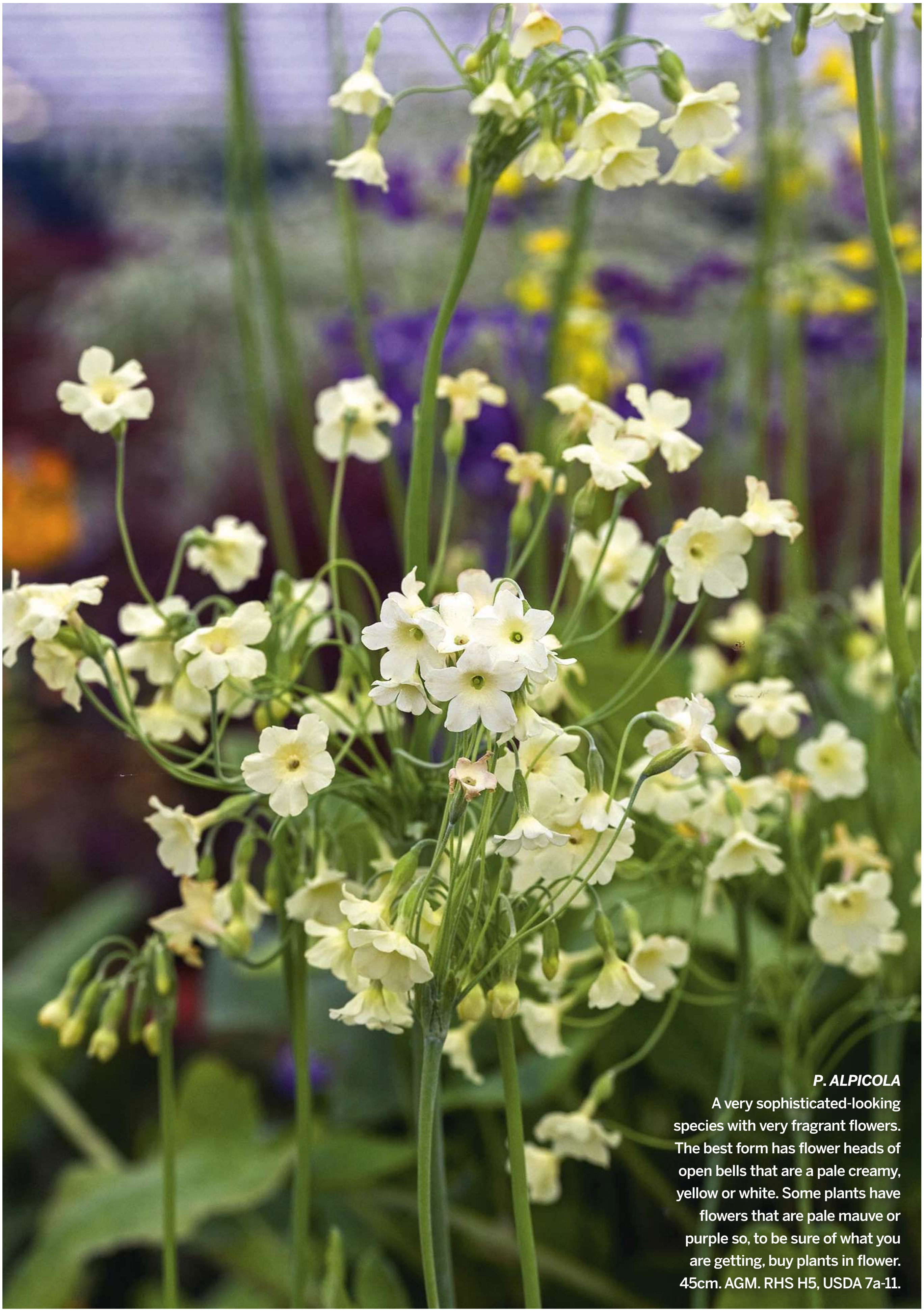
The British native oxslip, now rare in the wild, resembles the more common cowslip (*P. veris*) but has paler flowers that nod to one side of the stem. Easy to grow in shady places. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.



GAP PHOTOS

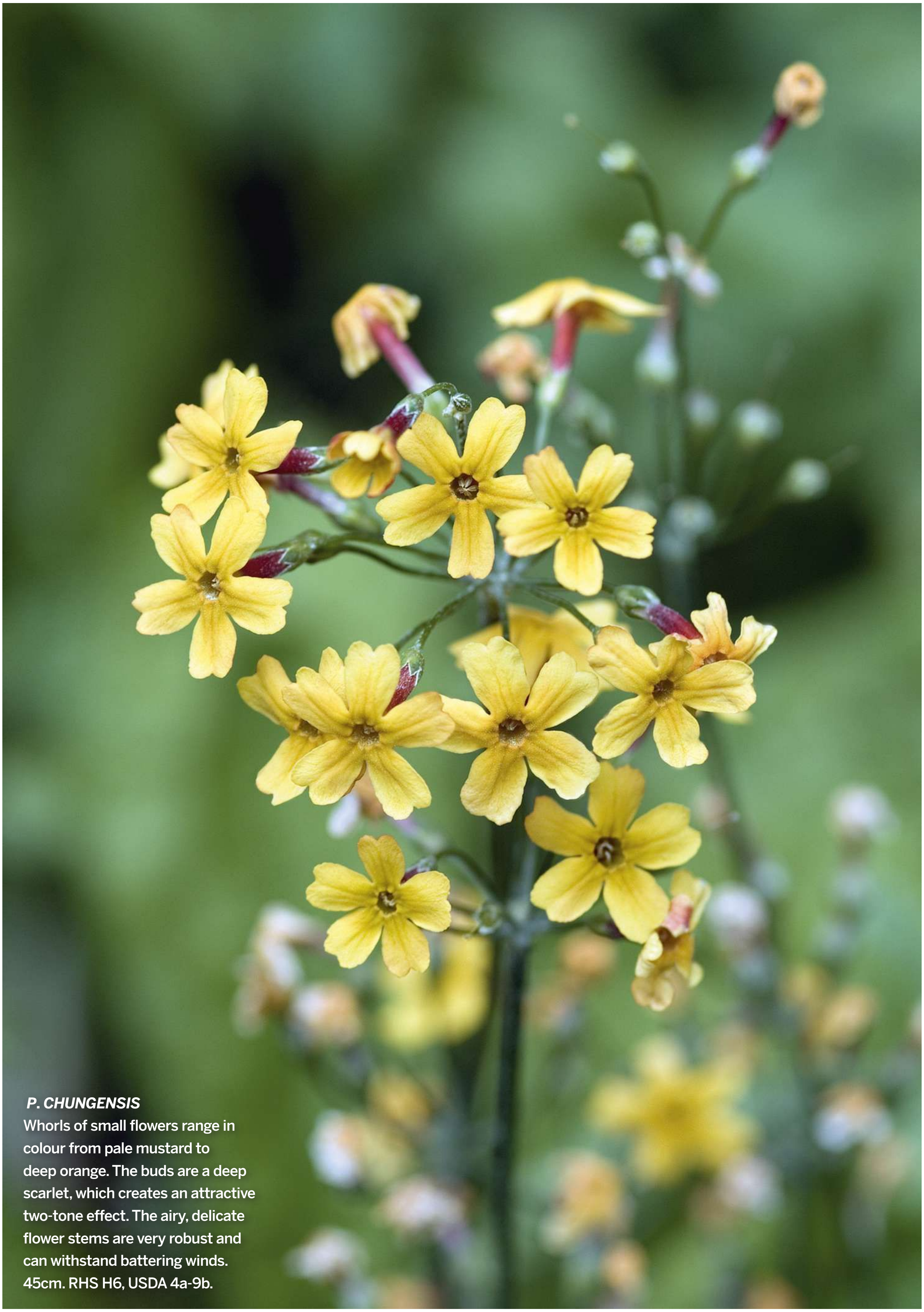
***P.* 'FRANCISCA'**

Established plants produce dozens of flower stems with ruffled, jade-green flowers March to July. The original plant was discovered growing on a traffic island in British Columbia, Canada. 25cm. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.



P. ALPICOLA
A very sophisticated-looking species with very fragrant flowers. The best form has flower heads of open bells that are a pale creamy, yellow or white. Some plants have flowers that are pale mauve or purple so, to be sure of what you are getting, buy plants in flower. 45cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.

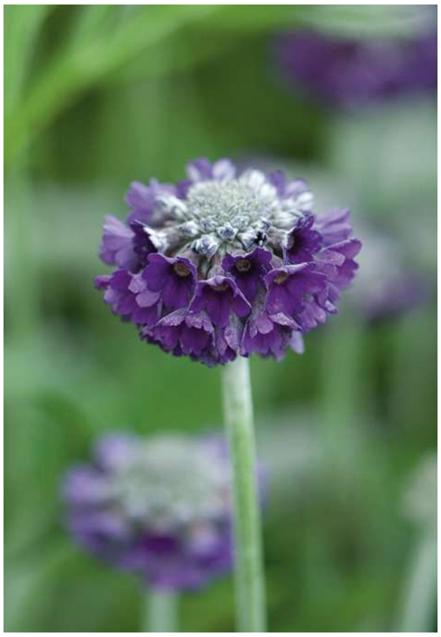
JENNY LILLY / GAP PHOTOS



P. CHUNGENSIS

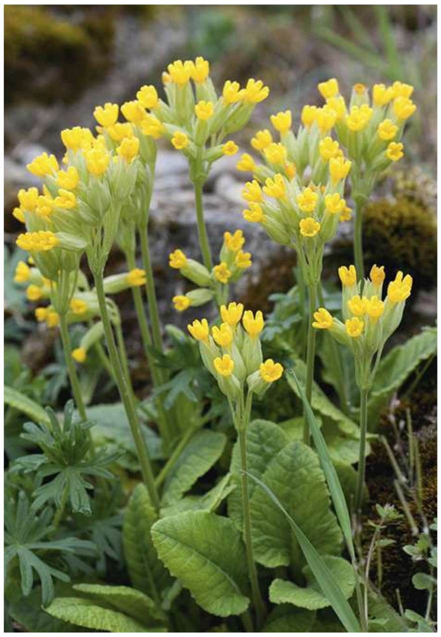
Whorls of small flowers range in colour from pale mustard to deep orange. The buds are a deep scarlet, which creates an attractive two-tone effect. The airy, delicate flower stems are very robust and can withstand battering winds. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

RITA COATES / GARDENWORLD IMAGES



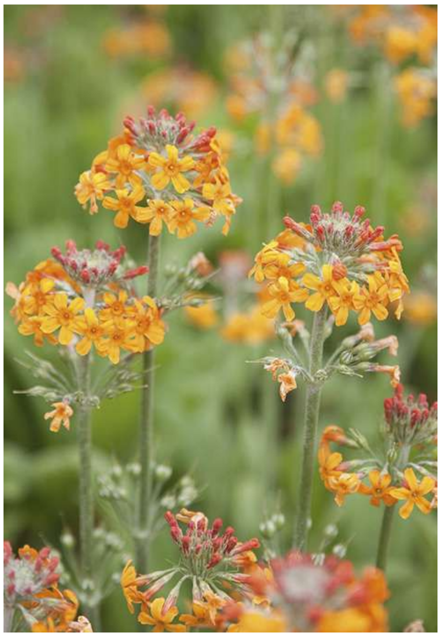
JACQUI DRACUP / ALAMY

P. CAPITATA
Tight heads of purple flowers appear from June to August. Its stems and buds are covered with a silvery farina that gives it a ghostly glow. Needs moist, but not wet, soil in a cool situation. 20cm. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.



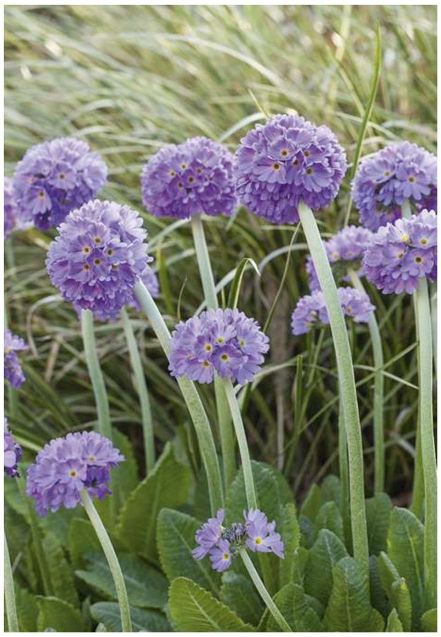
BENEDIKT DITTLI / GAP PHOTOS

P. VERIS
The cowslip grows in open chalkland in much drier conditions than most primulas, and it will naturalise in rough grass and self-seed. Flowers appear in late spring and have a slight perfume. 20cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.



LIZ EVERY / GARDENWORLD IMAGES

P. BULLEYANA
Flourishes in boggy, peaty soil and on the banks of ponds and streams. Whorls of fragrant orange-yellow flowers open from orange buds from June to July. Best planted en masse. 75cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.



MARIANNE MAJERUS GARDEN IMAGES

P. DENTICULATA
One of the first Chinese primulas to reach UK gardens in the 19th century. Easy to grow, its distinctive flowers appear from March to May. White and pink seed strains have been bred. 25cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.

Cultivation

In general, members of the genus are plants of woodland fringes, thriving in cool, dappled shade in slightly acidic soil that is rich in organic matter. Other species are from cool, mountain meadows, so all dislike hot, dry summers.

- In his poem *The Primrose of the Rock* Wordsworth writes of a tuft of primroses valiantly flowering season after season in the crevice of a boulder. For a number of years outside our barn we had a primrose that grew in a crack in the concrete. It is tenacious plants like these that have given rise to the totally erroneous belief that *Primula* will put up with anything in the garden. To flourish, and to come back year after year, they need to be properly cultivated.

- The primrose types are perfectly suited to life under deciduous trees and shrubs or among late-flowering perennials. It is important that they are shaded in high summer when they are resting and, in many species, when the foliage has died back. The candelabra types need more moisture than the primrose ones and will grow in full sun as long as the soil is consistently moist, especially during the summer months. *Primula sieboldii* are fussy plants and will not tolerate any lime in the soil.

- In common with other woodland plants, primrose roots stay close to the surface, so they will not flourish in hot, dry soils. Mulching plants in the autumn with leaf mold or compost will feed the plants and help the soil to retain moisture during dry spells. Treated in this way, primroses will spread into large clumps which, after three or four years, have a tendency to die out in the middle. When this happens, dig up the plant at the end of the summer, tease apart the healthy crowns and replant them immediately. If the clumps are very large you may need to cut out the old, woody parts with a sharp spade.

Collections

Double primroses
Caroline Stone keeps the National Collection of more than 80 forms of primroses with double flowers at her garden in Launceston, Cornwall. The garden is open by appointment only and the best time to visit is from mid March to early May. **glebegarden.co.uk**

Asiatic primulas
Staddon Farm Nurseries, near Holsworthy in Devon, has a large collection of Asiatic primulas, including the National Collection of *Primula sieboldii* (not featured). The nursery is open by appointment only, but its plants will be exhibited at the RHS shows at Cardiff, Malvern and Hampton Court Palace. **pennysprimulas.co.uk**

Barnhaven primula
The collection of Barnhaven primroses is now held in northern Brittany, France, and is open between February and April. This is one of the few nurseries that supply the original Barnhaven primroses. **barnhaven.com**

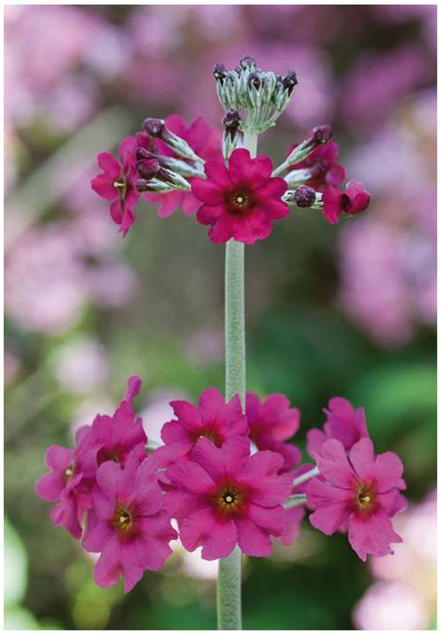
Where to see and buy

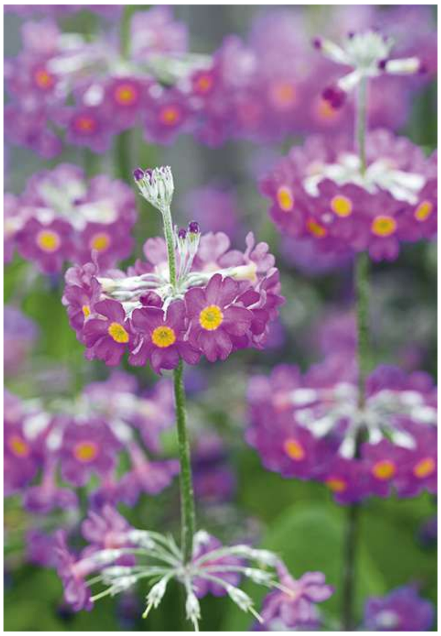
- **The Beth Chatto Gardens**
  Elmstead Market, Colchester,
  Essex CO7 7DB.
  Tel 01206 822007, bethchatto.co.uk
- **Cath's Garden Plants**
  The Walled Garden, Heaves Hotel,
  Heaves, nr Levens, Cumbria LA8 8EF.
  Tel 015395 61126,
  cathsgardenplants.co.uk
- **Long Acre Plants**
  Charlton Musgrove, nr Wincanton,
  Somerset BA9 8EX.
  Tel 01963 32802,
  plantsforshade.com

Reader offer

Beth Chatto Gardens, which stocks a good selection of the primulas featured here, is offering *Gardens Illustrated* readers a 10% discount on all plants until 30 April.

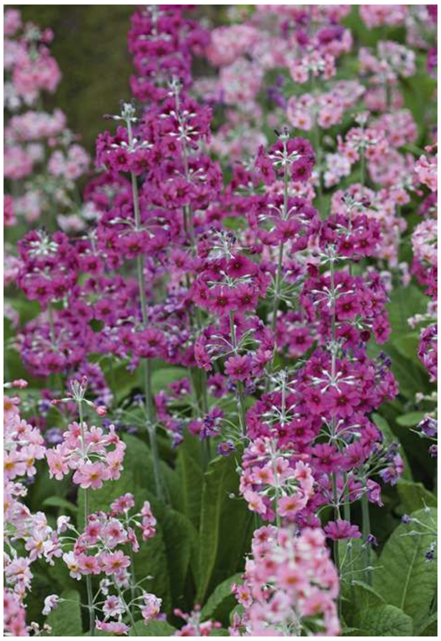
- **For details see page 112.**

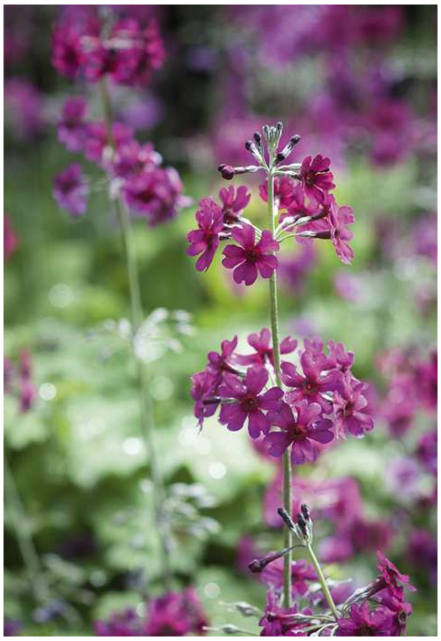

FLOWERPHOTOS / ALAMY


JENNY LILLY / GWI

***P. JAPONICA* 'MILLER'S CRIMSON'**
The reddish-purple flowers are a stronger colour than the species and grow in clusters at the top of strong flower stems in May and June. Will tolerate the wettest of soils. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

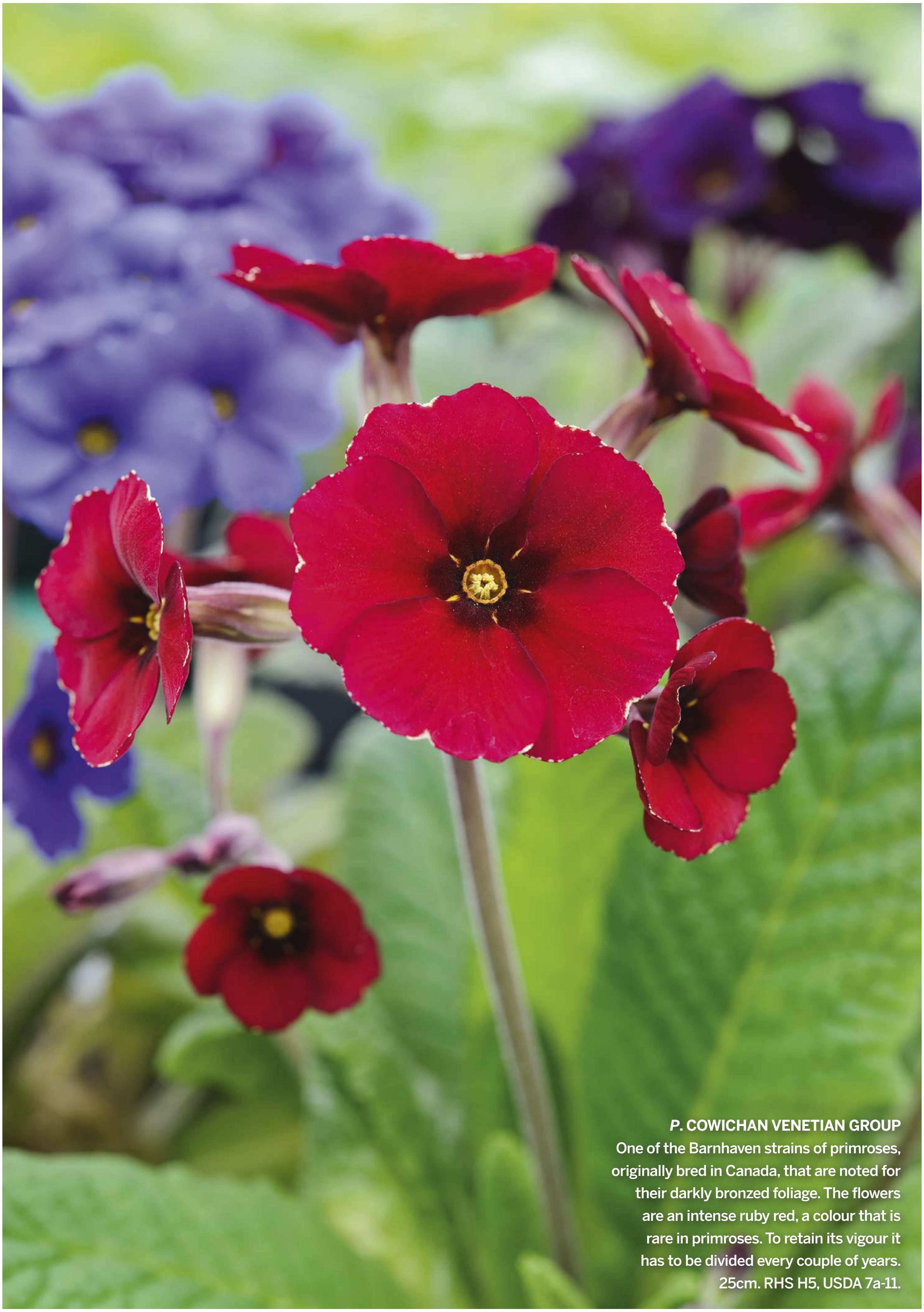
P. BEESIANA
This vigorous candelabra-type primula has stout stems that carry whorls of magenta flowers with a yellow centre in summer. In ideal conditions (cool and damp) it self-seeds profusely. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.


JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS


JOANNA KOSSAK / GAP PHOTOS

***P. PULVERULENTA* BARTLEY HYBRIDS**
A strain of hybrids that can range in colour from sugar- to salmon-pink, with occasional flowers that revert to the species magenta. Flowers grow in tiers that open in succession up the stem. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

P. PULVERULENTA
Striking magenta flowers contrast with the buds and stems, which are covered in a white farina. Flowers grow in five or six clusters that open in succession up the stem. Long-lived in rich soil. 1m. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.



P. COWICHAN VENETIAN GROUP
One of the Barnhaven strains of primroses, originally bred in Canada, that are noted for their darkly bronzed foliage. The flowers are an intense ruby red, a colour that is rare in primroses. To retain its vigour it has to be divided every couple of years. 25cm. RHS H5, USDA 7a-11.

JASON INGRAM

Stephen Lacey

The columnist, designer, broadcaster and former *Gardeners' World* stalwart, discusses historic gardens, serendipity and enjoying the pleasures of garden scent while driving

WORDS CHRISTOPHER STOCKS PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Meeting Stephen Lacey, for someone like me who only writes about gardens among many other things, is a fairly daunting prospect. Formidably knowledgeable and occasionally acerbic in his opinions, he is arguably Britain's leading garden writer, with a reputation built on a series of brilliant books and his regular columns for *The Telegraph*, which he has been writing since the late 1980s. So I await his arrival at a restaurant in central London a little nervously, checking through my notes and wondering if he's going to eat me, rather than the food, for lunch.

Yet when he arrives he couldn't be more charming, handing me a posy of flowers from his garden, each of them carefully selected for their scent. "As you write about perfume," he says, "I thought you might enjoy them." He's clearly researched me at least as thoroughly as I've researched him, and as a fellow journalist he knows exactly what I need from our interview, though as he says, "It's funny not to be asking the questions for once."

Born in 1957, he was brought up in north Wales and educated at Shrewsbury School, before studying French and German at Oxford. "I'd always been interested in ecology and the natural world," he says, "and I gradually took over my parents' acre of garden while I was at university, though I left the lawn to my father, while my mother enjoyed doing the fruit and veg. There was lots of time for gardening in the long vacations, and I carried on with it after I moved to London in 1981. I'm still gardening the same plot nearly 40 years on."

He started work at a property firm ("which was really just a way of getting to London") and joined an amateur theatre group ("some of my colleagues worked at Buckingham Palace, so we used to have royal premieres with the Queen and Princess Diana"), but at the same time he had started reading books by the influential gardener Margery Fish. "That made me realise I was more interested in plants than garden design," he says, "so I thought I'd write a book about my own experience of gardening. I explained my plan to my boss and he very kindly said there'd still be a job for me if it didn't work out, and I spent the next year or so writing the book at my kitchen table."

Stephen didn't have to ask for his job back. *The Startling Jungle: Colour and Scent in the Romantic Garden* came out in 1986, and though, as he says, "it didn't sell a lot of copies, it seemed to end up with the right people. Roy Strong reviewed and liked it, and through that I got invited to write for *The Telegraph*, which I've been doing ever since." That led in turn to a commission to write *Gardens of the National Trust*, which he describes as "an epic project: it took nearly five years to write and I had to visit around 150 gardens, but it really taught me about garden history". He followed it up with *Scent in Your Garden* and *Real Gardening*, both of them beautifully written as well as packed with practical, hands-on advice.

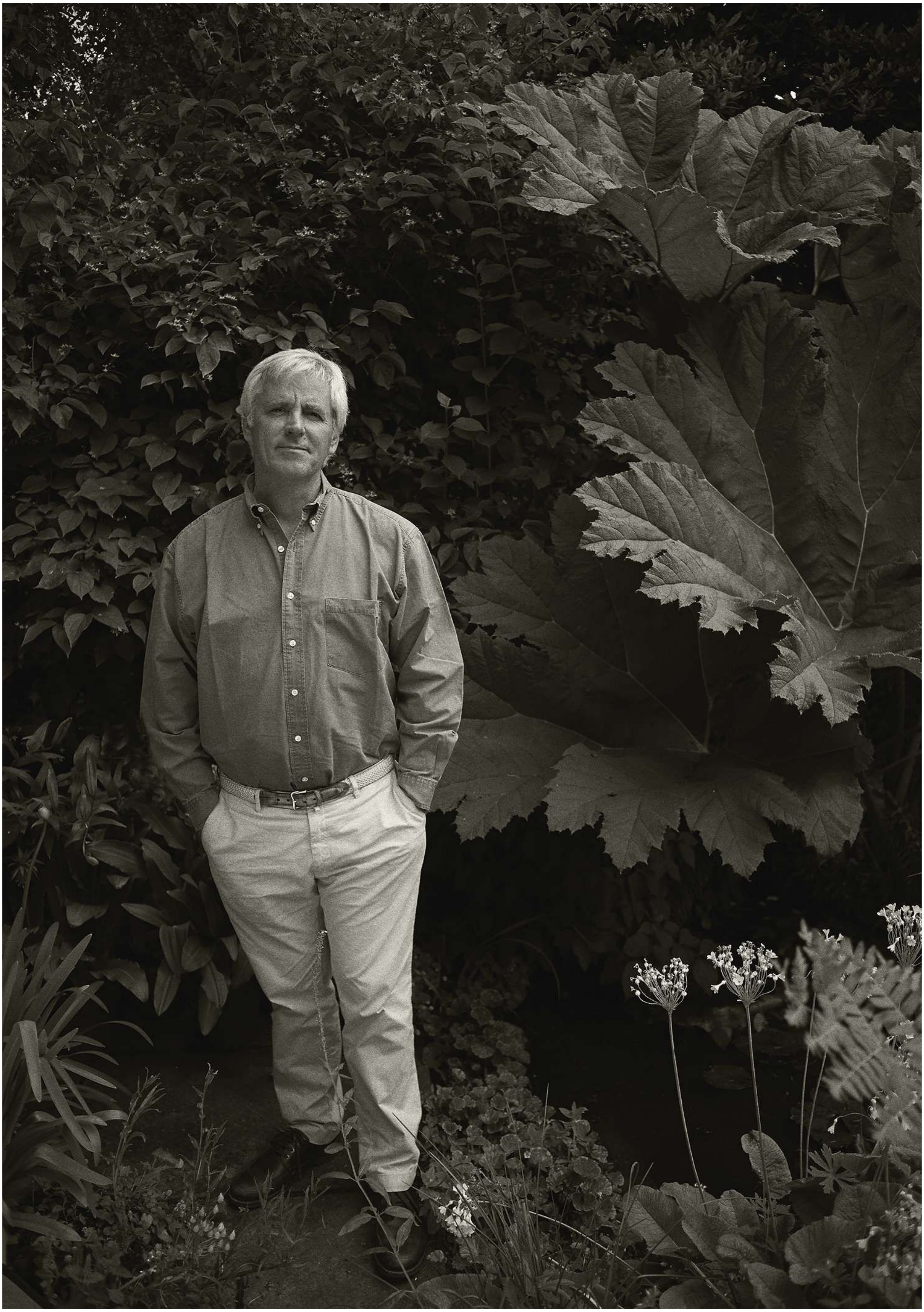
"Looking back now," Stephen adds, "I think I was really lucky with the timing: the big garden boom of the mid 1980s was about to take off, and I really benefited from that." Having a gift for friendship and a well-turned phrase obviously helped, but Stephen modestly credits most of his big breaks to other people. His decade-long tenure at BBC's *Gardeners' World*, for example, came about thanks to a recommendation from the legendary designer John Brookes. "John had been booked to speak as an expert about Monet's garden at Giverny for a spin-off from *Gardeners' World* about historic gardens, but at the last minute he couldn't go, so I had to suddenly stand in and talk about a garden I'd never actually visited."

Stephen continues to garden in Wales today and for friends in Mallorca, though as an inveterate traveller he rarely sleeps in the same place more than three nights in a row: "In the past two weeks I've been to Italy twice, to Mallorca, England and Wales." He describes his own plot as "not really a designed garden, though it's full of unusual things; I can't resist getting new plants and trying to fit them in somewhere." More recently he's built up a collection of tender, scented rhododendrons, a pot of which he'll often take with him in the car. "I do a lot of driving," he explains, "so it's nice to have a scented travelling companion." It's an enjoyable image to take away from our lunch along with my scented flowers. □

USEFUL INFORMATION
A new and updated edition of Stephen Lacey's *Gardens of the National Trust*, which includes the additions of recent acquisitions, such as Dyffryn Gardens, Tredegar House and Stoneywell has just been published, priced £30 (available for £27 from the *Gardens Illustrated* bookshop, see page 108 for details). You can find out more about Stephen's writing and design consultancy at stephenlacey.com

NEXT MONTH RHS president Sir Nicholas Bacon.

> *"I thought I'd write a book about my own experience of gardening. I explained my plan to my boss and he kindly said there'd still be a job for me if it didn't work out"*



Tulip mania

Designer Kristy Ramage chooses three tulip combinations for borders that really pack a punch – delivering theatre, colour and beauty with aplomb to her Monmouthshire garden

WORDS **KRISTY RAMAGE** PHOTOGRAPHS **BRITT WILLOUGHBY DYER**

Rich flamboyance

Delicate species tulips are wonderful for peppering spring meadows and gracing restrained knot gardens, but in borders, surrounded by herbaceous perennials that are starting to race away, you can make bold use of the amazing, lustrous colours of cultivated tulips. In this spring performance, I favour a few characters from the circus mixed in with the elegance of classic players.

1 *Tulipa* 'Paul Scherer'
The darkest, inky maroon-black tulip, rivalling *T.* 'Queen of Night' (see next page). In my border, this Triumph tulip links perfectly with the colour of the copper beech tree beyond. Gives weight and scale to planting. 50cm. AGM*. RHS H6†. Late April to early May.

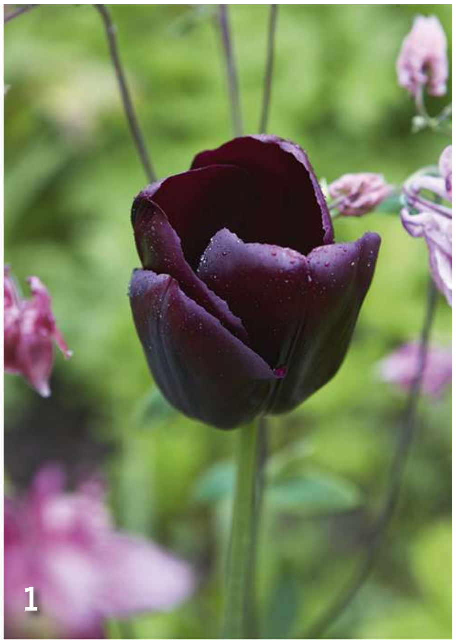
2 *T.* 'Columbine'
An exquisite and rare Rembrandt tulip, a 'broken' tulip of the type that was prized by the English florists' societies of the early 19th century. It opens to a wide cup, displaying black anthers inside. 50cm. Late April to May.

3 *T.* 'Verona'
An Early Double tulip with a soft, cupped double flower that is a creamy, pale-yellow flower colour, reminiscent of mayonnaise. It's lightly scented and gorgeous for picking. Just be aware that it's slightly short in stature. 35cm. Early to late April.

4 *T.* 'Marilyn'
This Lily-flowered tulip has a touch of flamboyance and is planted with *T.* 'Paul Scherer' in a tall pot next to the main border, where it flashes its fabulous rose flame without dominating the whole border. 50cm. Late April to early May.

5 *T.* 'Violet Beauty'
Growing in among the self-seeded aquilegia and *Geranium phaeum* 'Lily Lovell', this Single Late tulip provides an unusual and lively colour that lifts the darker tones of the blackcurrant flowers and leaf markings of the surrounding *Geranium phaeum* 'Samobor'. 60cm. Early to late May.

6 *T.* 'Blushing Girl'
Another Single Late tulip. This elegant cultivar changes colour over the season, starting with a pink edge to the petals over an ivory to primrose base, becoming more flushed with age. 60cm. Early to late May.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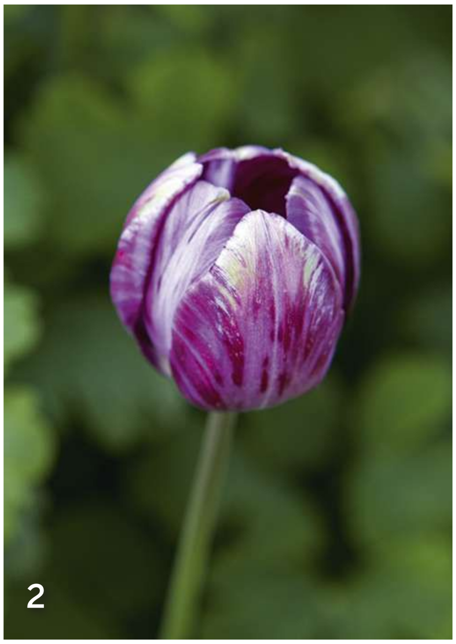
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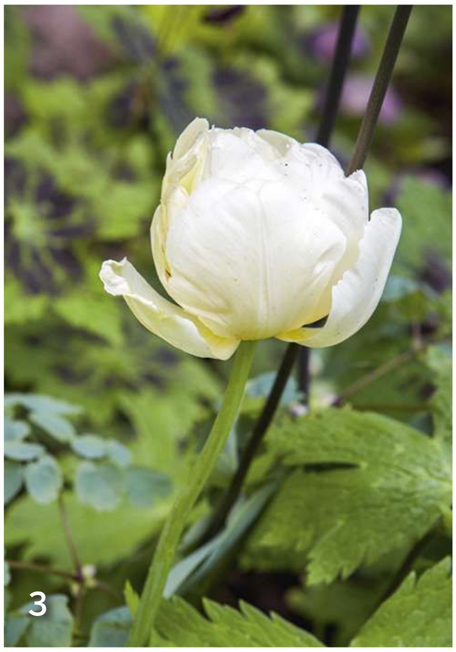
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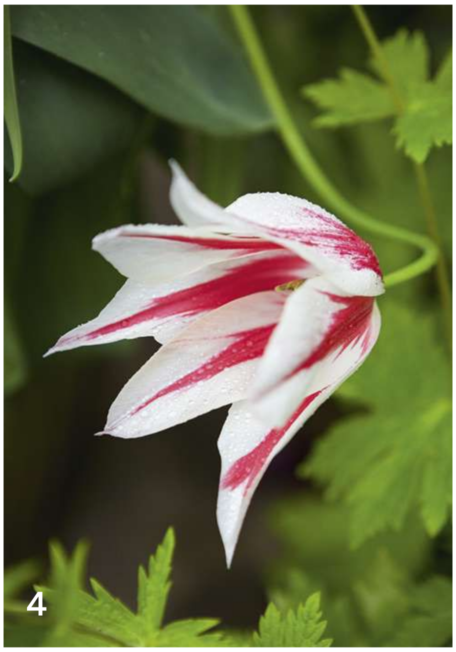
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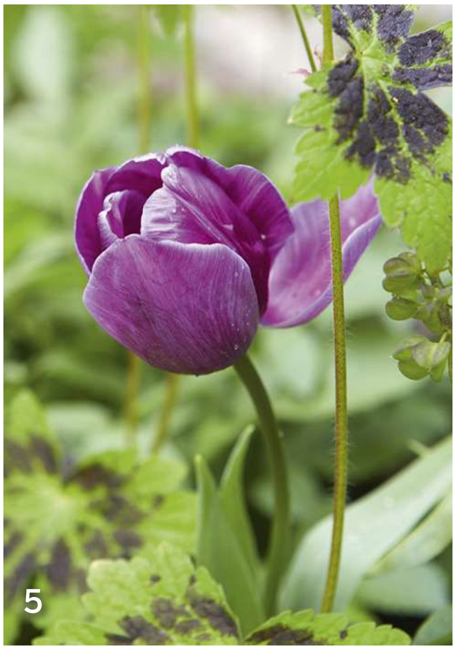
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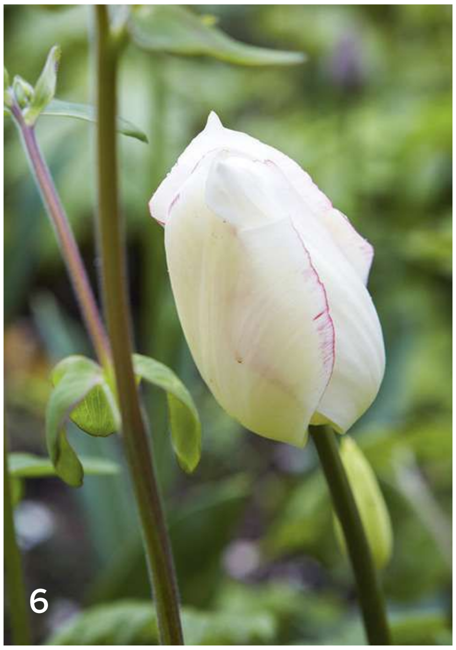
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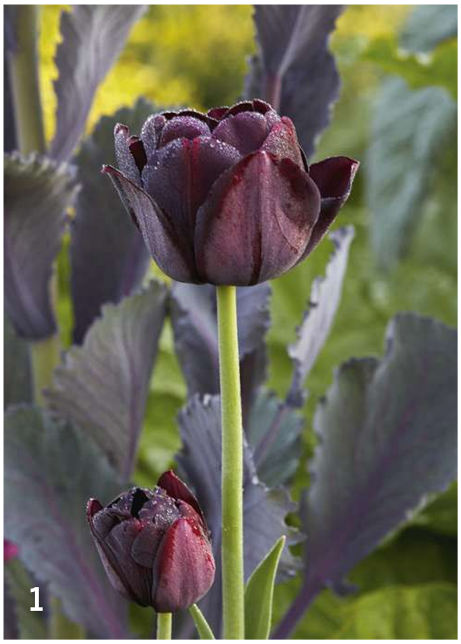
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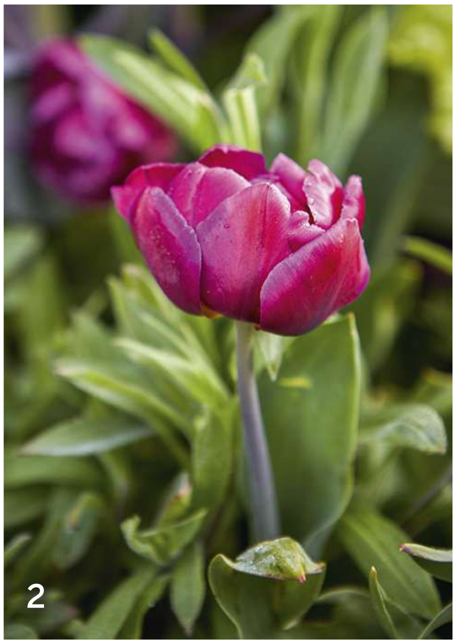
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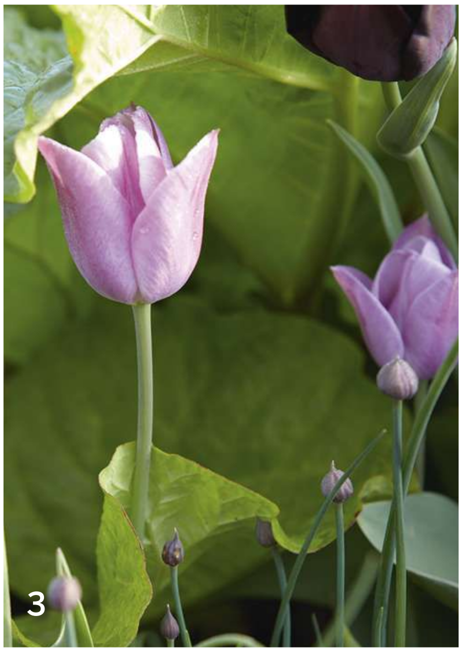
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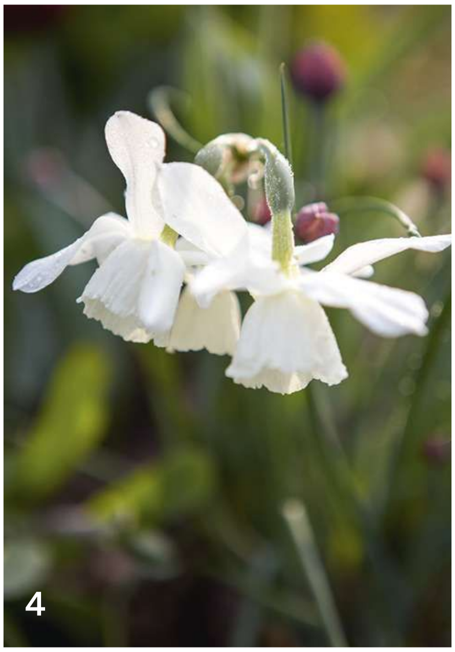
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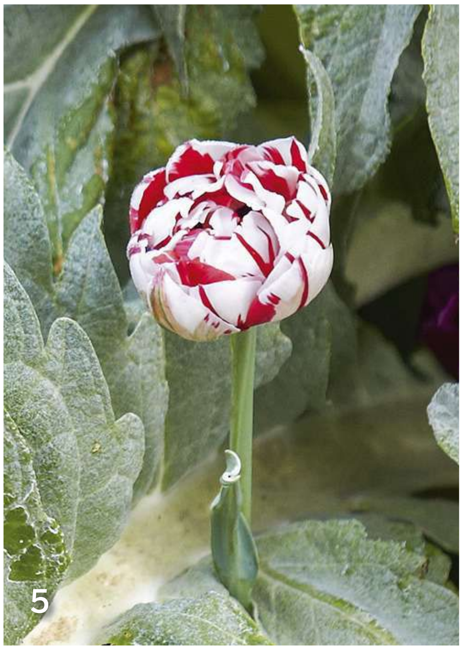
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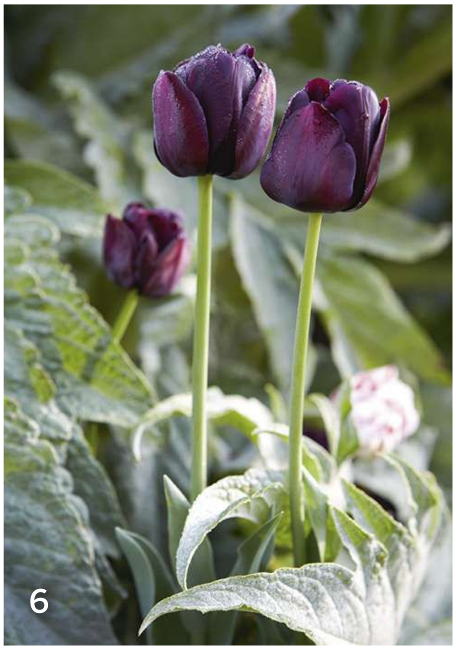
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A surprise appearance

In the kitchen garden, tulips, rhubarb and artichokes mingle with currant bushes and a red cabbage that's gone rather stunningly to seed. The whole scene with a backdrop of pear blossom, is rather like a naïve painting, with the broad brush strokes of the giant leaves and the candy striped marvel that brings the tulip medley to life: *Tulipa* 'Carnaval de Nice'.

1 *T.* 'Blackjack'
An early flowering, dark plum-coloured Triumph tulip whose role will be taken by *T.* 'Queen of Night' (see below) later in the season. Both of these tulips have the ability to 'anchor' an otherwise slightly frothy combination of bulbs. 55cm. Early to late April.

2 *T.* 'Double Dazzle'
I have to admit that there is a lack of elegance about some double tulips, but the glorious depth of colour in this Early Double is its redeeming feature. It is particularly lovely when combined with glaucous leaves. 45cm. Early to late April.

3 *T.* 'Gabriella'
A wonderful sugary, pale-pink Triumph tulip that lightens to the edge of the petals. It looks as though it's catching the light, even on a dull day. Flowering here among the chives. 45cm. Early to late April.

4 *Narcissus* 'Thalia'
I wouldn't be without *N.* 'Thalia' somewhere in a garden. The form and colour of this dwarf trumpet daffodil is so good it's impossible not to be charmed. Introduced in 1916, it has been deservedly popular ever since for inter-planting with other bulbs or planting in drifts in a woodland. 30cm. Early to late April.

5 *T.* 'Carnaval de Nice'
The complexity of this Double Late's flower, combined with the red striations is utterly beguiling but needs careful placing. The artichoke leaves have the scale and subtle colouring to frame it like a painting. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6. Early May.

6 *T.* 'Queen of Night'
This Single Late tulip is so well known it needs no introduction. It is extremely popular, and justifiably so. Mix it with the double form *T.* 'Black Hero' for a spectacular late-season display. 60cm.

Softly spoken

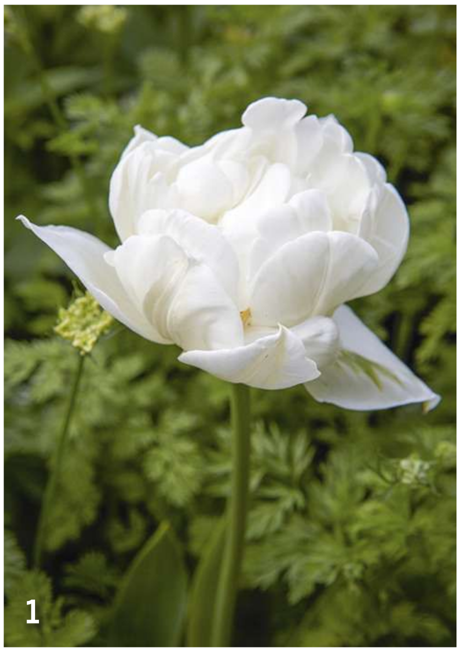
With such a bold flower as the tulip, it's often the case that a restrained palette of colour works best. With the fresh emerging chartreuse-green leaves of the box, a simple combination of bulbs and early spring flowers in creamy white and soft apricot pinks is fresh and airy.

1 *T.* 'Mount Tacoma'
Especially beautiful in plump bud, where the slight green flush on the white looks more pronounced. The mass of petals gives this Double Late tulip the opulence of double peonies, and it's wonderful for cutting for the house. 45cm. Late April to early May.

2 *T.* 'Apricot Beauty'
Named in 1953, this lightly scented, softest salmon-rose tulip is vintage in more ways than one – imagine silk lingerie from the 1920s and you have this Single Early tulip to a tee. 45cm. AGM. RHS H6. Early to late April.

3 *T.* 'Menton'
Like a super athlete, this Single Late is a bold and lustrous tulip, very tall and bursting with health. It's an iridescent pink with an exotic shimmer of salmon, and orange. 65cm. AGM. RHS H6. Early to late May.

4 *T.* 'La Belle Époque'
A different vibe to the classic tulip shapes with their saturated hues, it is a colour-shifting blend of apricot-pink and coffee that ages beautifully. Double Late. 45cm. Late April to early May.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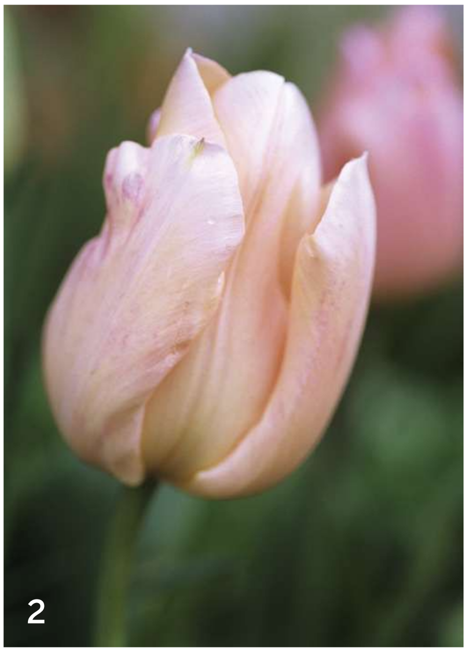
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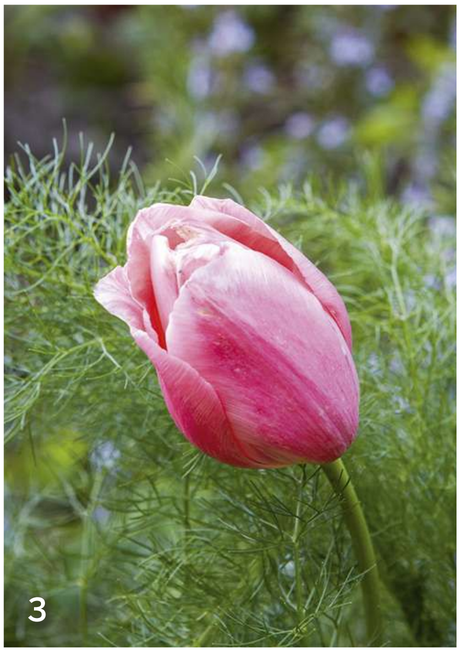
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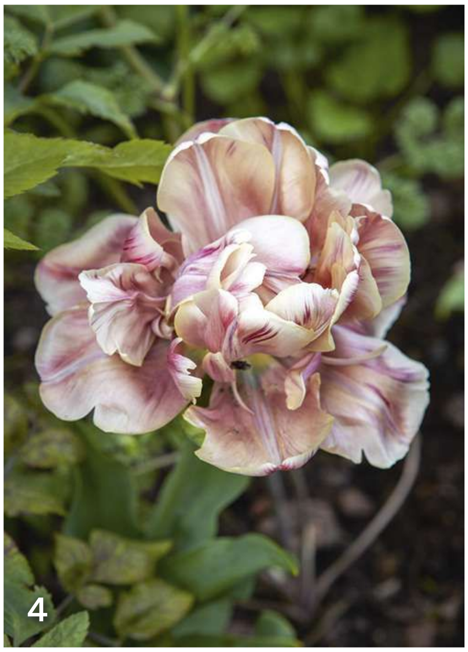
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Tips for combining and planting spring bulbs

Knowing what mood you want to convey with any planting is a great starting point for choosing the plants. I find writing down some words to describe what I want to achieve really helps to distil ideas. Is this garden formal or naïve? Do I want flamboyance or restraint? Do I want the border to be calm or energetic? With those thoughts in place, you'll find narrowing down the choice of bulbs is much easier.

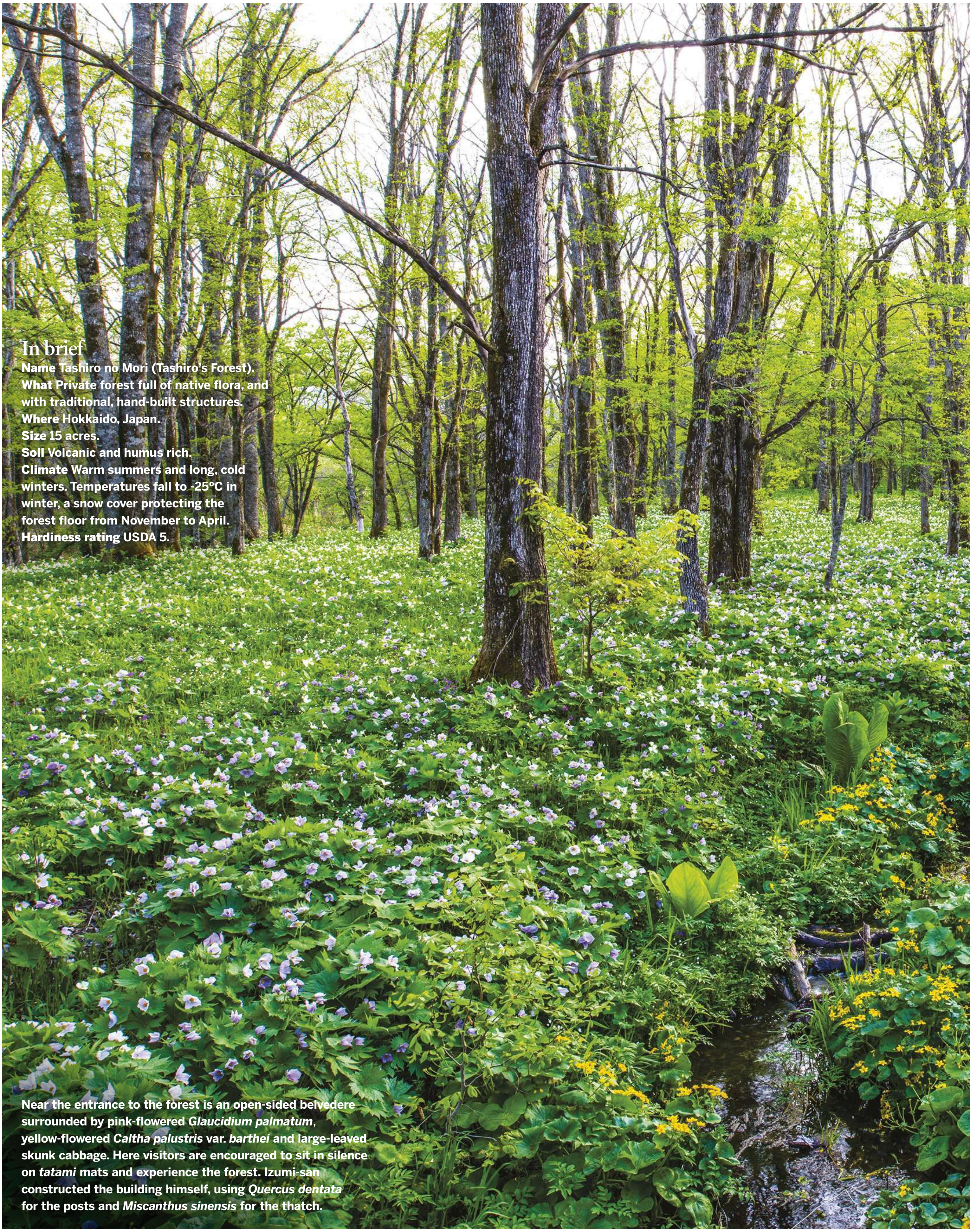
Look at form as well as colour. If you decide that you want restrained elegance, look for taller, finer shapes (lily-flowered tulips, for instance). If it's about bohemian opulence, include some sumptuous parrot tulips. If the feel is soft and romantic, indulge in some full-blown doubles with their mass of petals.

Beds of tulips on their own can look spectacular, but I prefer to grow them more sparsely in combination with perennials, where the emerging leaves and a few early flowers are a foil for the shapely heads of the tulips. I grow them through mounds of soft foliage of aquilegias, polemoniums, thalictrums and geraniums and the ferny copper coloured foliage of *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing', which tones with the dark tulips and sets off the light tulips beautifully.

WHERE TO BUY

- **Crocus**
Tel 01344 578111, crocus.co.uk
A well-chosen selection of bulbs with beautiful photos – helpful when designing combinations.
- **Jacques Amand International**
Tel 020 8420 7110, jacquesamandintl.com
A great selection, including true Rembrandt tulips, which are hard to find elsewhere.
- **Nijssen Bulbs**
Tel +31 (0)23 528 08 16, nijssenbulbs.nl
A wonderful selection of rare bulbs and historic tulips. Catalogue is a great source of inspiration.
- **Peter Nyssen**
Tel 0161 747 4000, peternyssen.com
A fantastic source for a variety of bulbs and plants. An organised website and helpful staff.

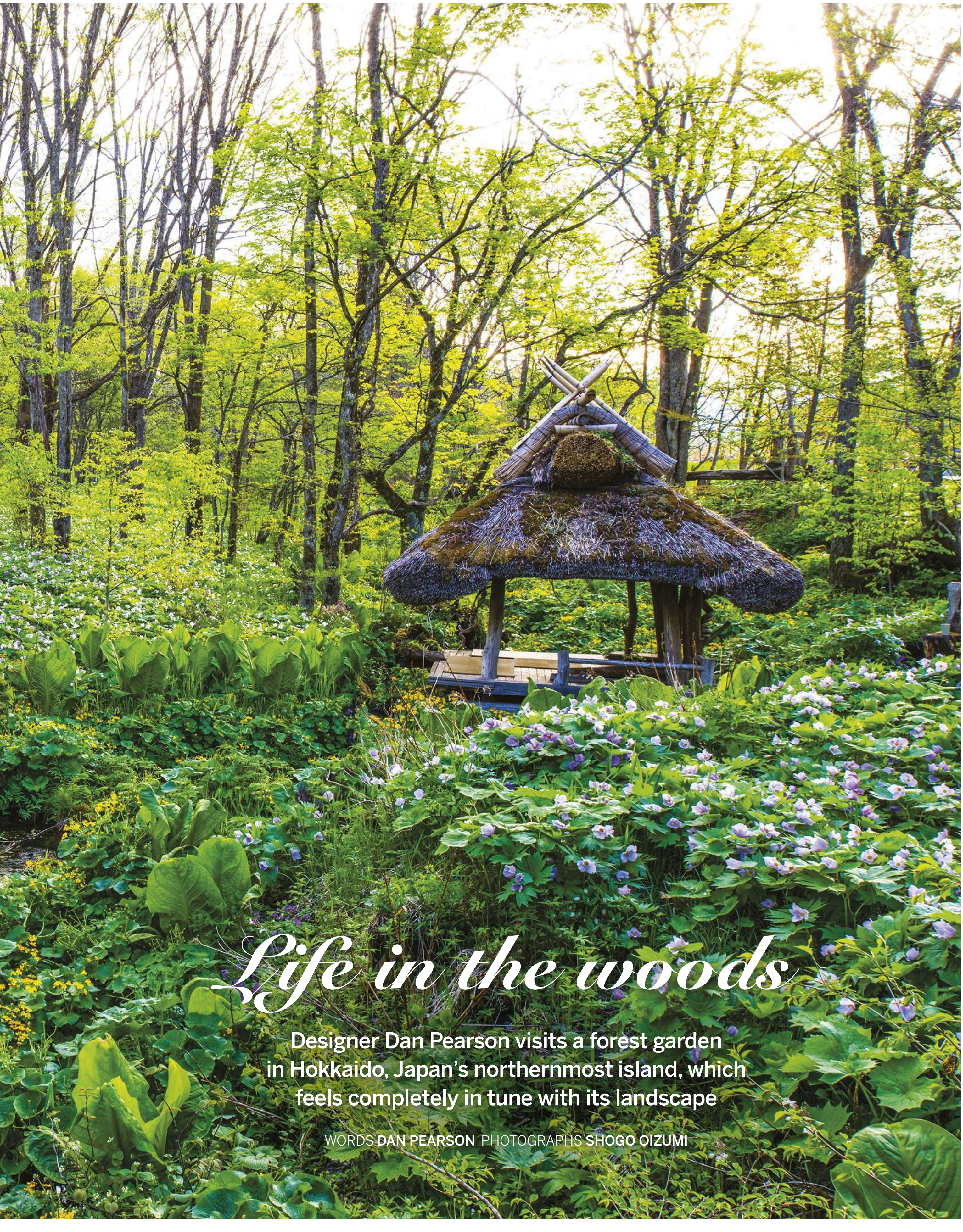
2 TORIE CHUGG / GAP PHOTOS



In brief

Name Tashiro no Mori (Tashiro's Forest).
What Private forest full of native flora, and with traditional, hand-built structures.
Where Hokkaido, Japan.
Size 15 acres.
Soil Volcanic and humus rich.
Climate Warm summers and long, cold winters. Temperatures fall to -25°C in winter, a snow cover protecting the forest floor from November to April.
Hardiness rating USDA 5.

Near the entrance to the forest is an open-sided belvedere surrounded by pink-flowered *Glaucidium palmatum*, yellow-flowered *Caltha palustris* var. *barthei* and large-leaved skunk cabbage. Here visitors are encouraged to sit in silence on *tatami* mats and experience the forest. Izumi-san constructed the building himself, using *Quercus dentata* for the posts and *Miscanthus sinensis* for the thatch.



Life in the woods

Designer Dan Pearson visits a forest garden in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island, which feels completely in tune with its landscape

WORDS **DAN PEARSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **SHOGO OIZUMI**

I first visited Izumi-san 15 years ago when I started working in Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. Over the years of revisiting his 'garden' I have been profoundly affected by this carefully managed environment, which is the result of a man that truly understands his setting and how to reveal its essence by touching down lightly and with humility.

Izumi-san arrived here 22 years ago. He had been looking for a place that he felt had a connection with his ancestors and evoked an image of his family name – Izumi, water from the spring. He named the place after his grandfather Tashiro.

You hear the sound of water as soon as you pull into the clearing on the edge of the forest. Izumi-san, a quiet and modest man meets you there and leads you through the canopy of oak and *Magnolia obovata* to a tiny dirt track. Your first destination is an open sided building, which perches among skunk cabbage in the moist hollow. Removing your shoes, you sit in silence and, framed by the heavy thatch above you, the forest reveals itself and its treasures.

When Izumi-san arrived here, the land had been abandoned for years and his ongoing work has been an exercise in careful management. First he removed the undergrowth and cut the *sasa*, the indigenous bamboo that chokes the forest floor. Over the years, repeated cutting has opened up a window of opportunity for the seedbank of woodlanders that were activated by the reduced competition.

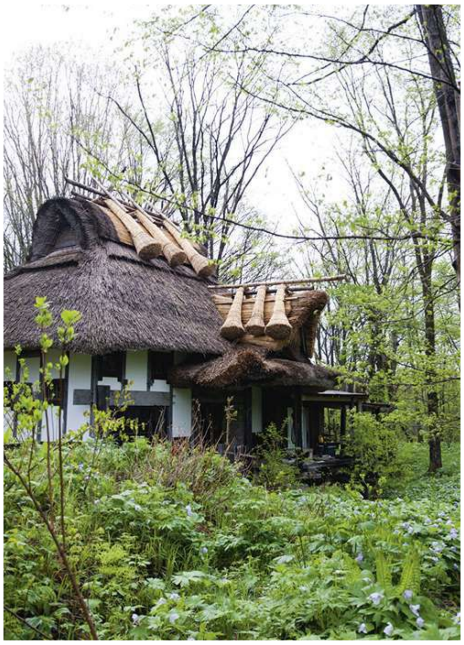
It is hard to see where he has made his mark until your eye tunes into the richness of what he has encouraged through careful management. A successive sweep of plants hug the niche that suits them, moving your eye across the terrain. First, *Caltha* and *Lysichiton camtschatcensis* in the hollows, then trilliums and anemones, with others rising in a layered succession.

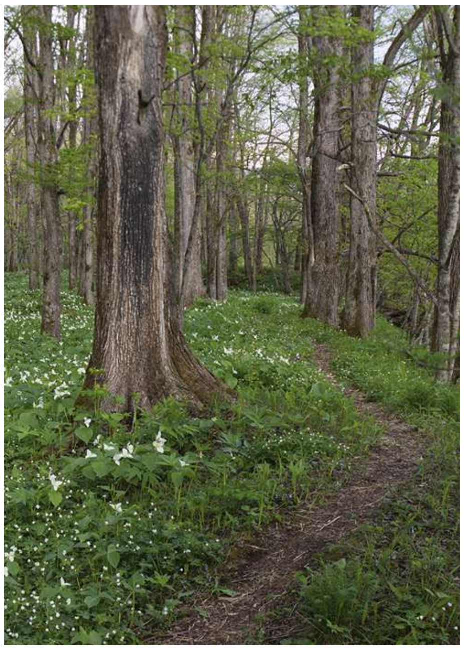
He has 'worked' the forest with an intuitive understanding of ecology, seeding plants and relocating seedlings where he knows they will favour a position. Soft and fragile-looking native plants make him want to protect them from vigorous woodlanders such as *Angelica ursina* and *Fallopia japonica*. He starts weeding these plants between spring and summer and preventing their colonisation by stopping them from seeding and spreading beyond where he sees their presence as fit. He has followed what he describes as a "primitive Japanese forest maintenance style"; experienced repeated failures, and learned from those experiences. Such plantsmanship is coupled with an aesthetic eye. He has crafted a way into the environment with a series of leafy paths that lead to places that allow you the opportunity of contemplation. His main dwelling, with a deck cantilevered out into the leafy ravine, is a carefully orientated lookout on a knoll that blends with its surroundings. This, like all the other structures on the site, was built by Izumi-san himself from the materials around him and like everything in this forest feels entirely rooted in the landscape. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address 23 Noduka 1 sen, Hiroo-cho, Hiroo-gun, Hokkaido, Japan 089-2561.
Tel + 81 (0)90 1305 9558.
Email mayochan@live.jp
Website tashironomori.com
Open By appointment only. Non Japanese speakers are advised to email.

- **Turn the page for 12 of Izumi-san's favourite plants.**





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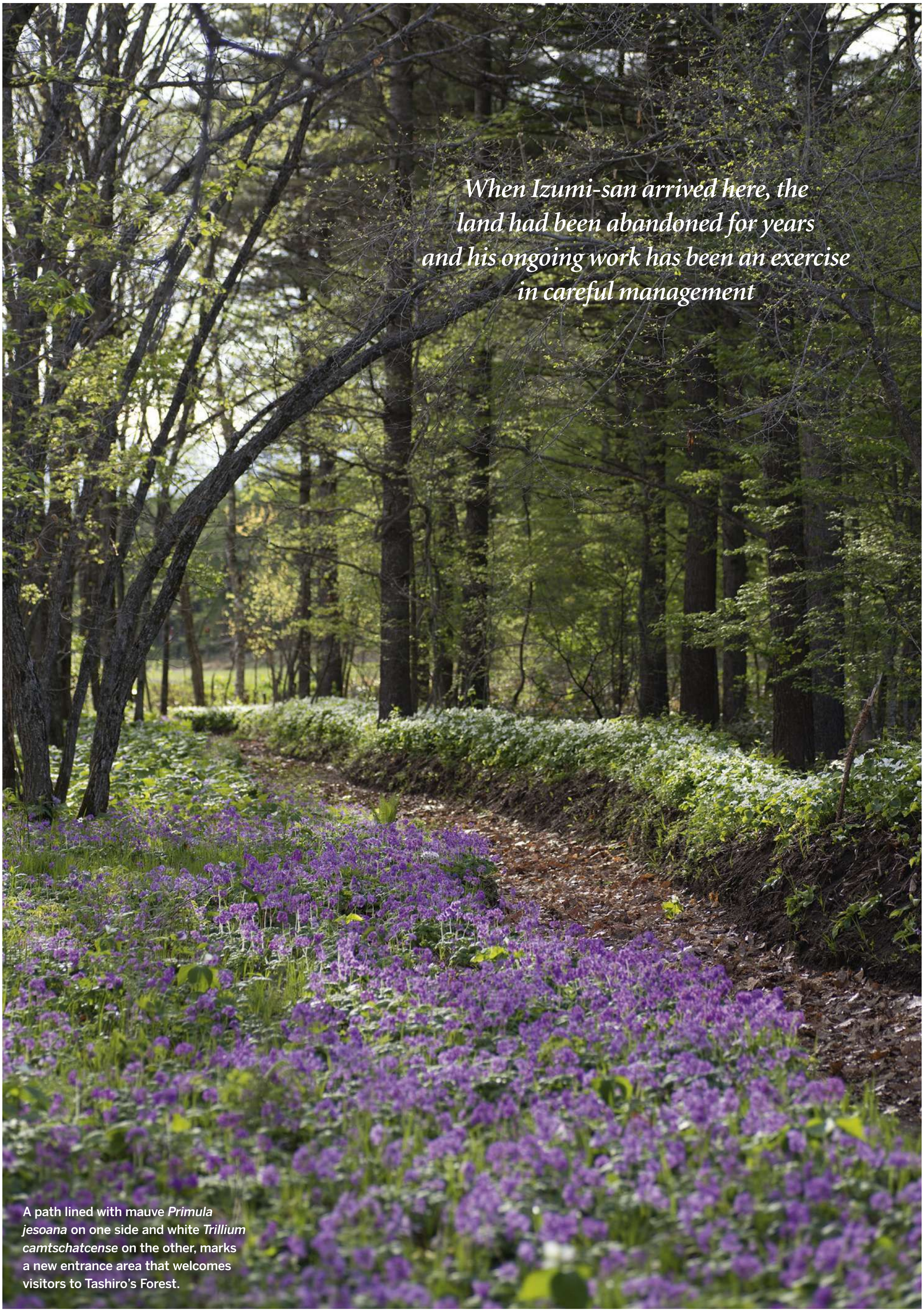
Izumi-san built his home in the forest himself, using the frame of a local farmer's old barn. He has added antique coloured glass and a thatched roof made from *Phragmites australis* in a traditional *umanori* style. Beside the house, he has built a pizza oven from old bricks – a perfect melding of antique materials and modern culture.

Izumi-san among *Primula jesoana* near the entrance to his forest. Meeting this quiet and modest man is one of the joys of visiting Tashiro's Forest.

Much of Hokkaido's deciduous woodland was cleared in the early 1900s, and Izumi-san's forest is regenerated first generation woodland. Here he has planted *Trillium camschatcense* and *Anemone flaccida*, which flower beneath *Ulmus davidiana* var. *japonica* in early spring.



When Izumi-san arrived here, the land had been abandoned for years and his ongoing work has been an exercise in careful management

A path lined with mauve *Primula jesoana* on one side and white *Trillium camtschatcense* on the other, marks a new entrance area that welcomes visitors to Tashiro's Forest.

12 of Izumi-san's favourite plants

1 *Erythronium japonicum*
This rhizomatous dog-tooth violet, makes an early start ahead of much of the perennial layer. Becomes dormant early. 35cm. USDA 4a-8b[†].

2 *Polemonium yezoense*
A clumping perennial with divided basal foliage and a reach of violet-blue summer flowers. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

3 *Caltha palustris* var. *barthei*
A perennial that flowers early and quickly becomes lush and leafy. The vivid, yellow-coloured flowers are edible. Does best in wet woodland. 50cm. USDA 3a-11.

4 *Chloranthus japonicus*
A woodland perennial, which features a yoke of bright-green foliage around a pale spike of creamy flower. In early spring, these stand upright in small groups on dark stalks. 20cm. USDA 6a-9b.

5 *Diphylleia grayi*
A rhizomatous perennial with paired foliage at the apex of wiry stems and pale fragile flowers. Izumi-san especially likes "the delicate flower and beautiful fruits". 35cm. USDA 4a-9b.

6 *Paeonia japonica*
A long-lived woodland peony, which Izumi-san describes as having a "demure look of white, single cups and attractive seedheads". 50cm. USDA 5a-8b.

7 *Glaucidium palmatum*
A long-lived, clump-forming perennial with violet-blue flowers held at the apex of clear stems above a ruff of foliage. Unlike most native plants, which Izumi-san says "tend to have modest and demure looks", this plant has big flowers that are both gorgeous and eye-catching. Likes damp woodland. 45cm. AGM[*]. RHS H5, USDA 5a-9b.

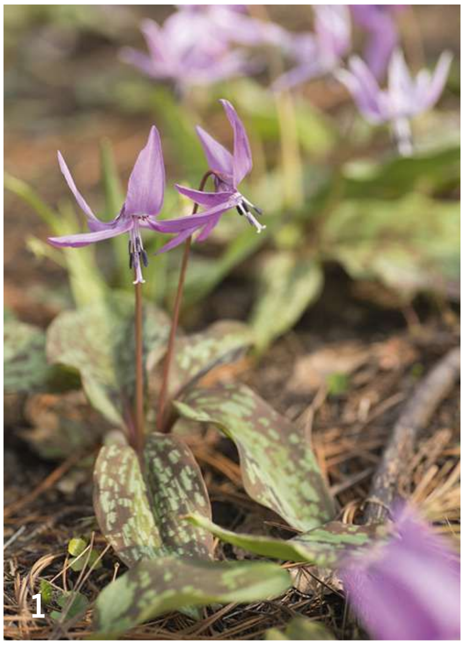
8 *Adiantum aleuticum*
A cartwheel of delicate foliage held aloft black stems, Izumi-san grows this deciduous maidenhair fern in shallow pans close to the house. Known as the peacock fern in Japan, this is a plant Izumi-san describes as chic. He loves its black stem. 50cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

9 *Primula jesoana*
A showy perennial that flowers in early summer while the perennial layer is still low. Beautifully shaped flowers appear above sweet-scented foliage and unique shoots that open like small umbrellas. 30cm.

10 *Veratrum maackii*
A striking, clump-forming perennial with pleated basal foliage and tall flowering spikes in summer. Izumi-san thinks its "beautiful black-coloured flowers" look as though "they are sprinkled with gold lacquer in the centre". 1.2m. USDA 3a-9b.

11 *Caulophyllum thalictroides* subsp. *robustum*
A delicate spring perennial with coppery young stems and foliage that last for the rest of the growing season. Has tiny yellow flowers and foliage that resembles that of a columbine. 60cm. USDA 4a-7b.

12 *Trillium camschatcense*
A long-lived rhizomatous perennial, which flowers in late spring and then becomes dormant as the perennial layer begins to dominate in summer. Izumi-san believes these plants, which can live to more than 100 years, represent a "vital force". 45cm.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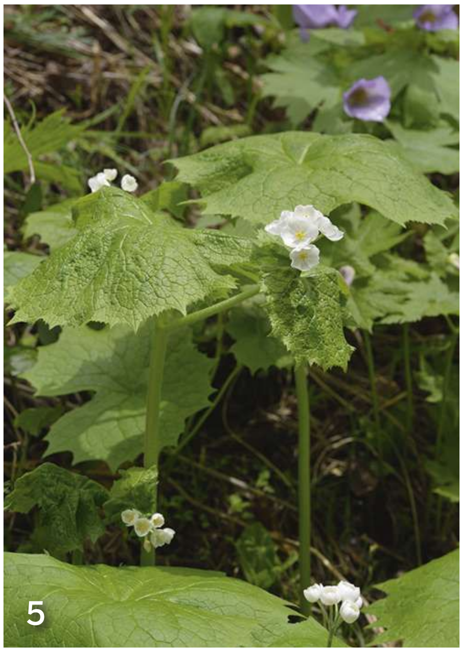
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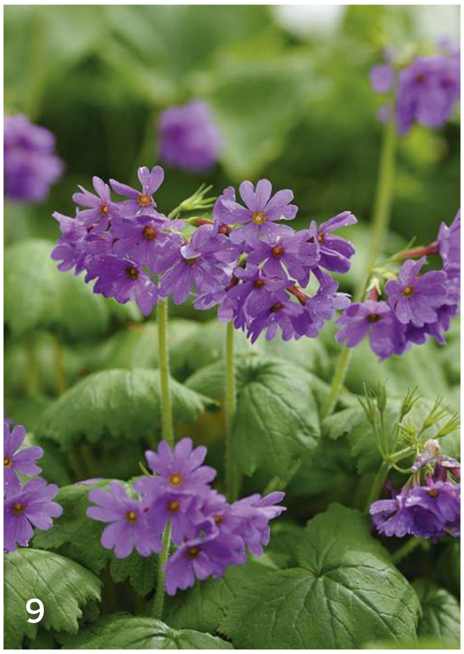
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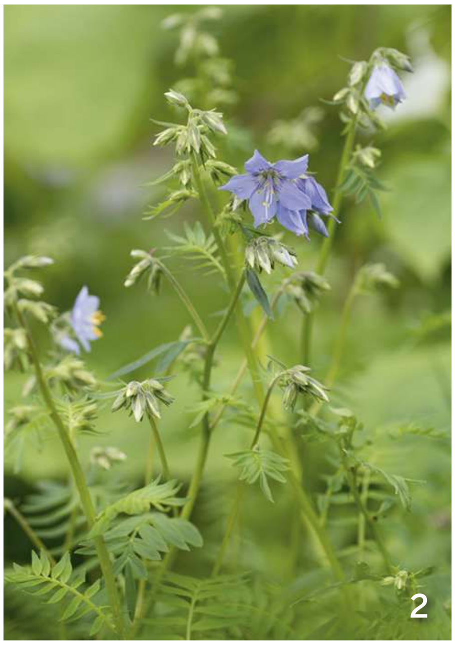

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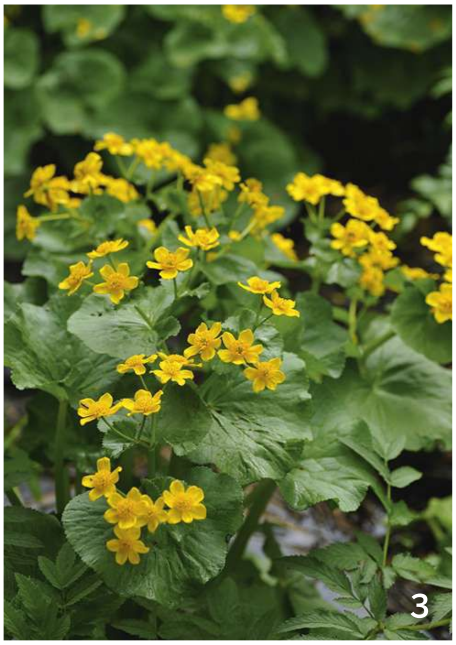

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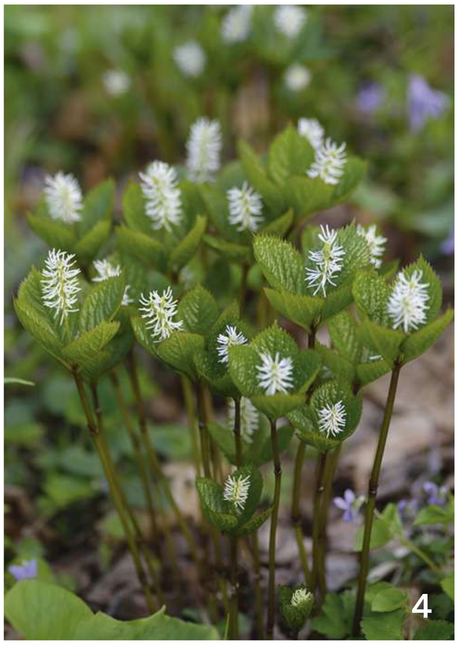

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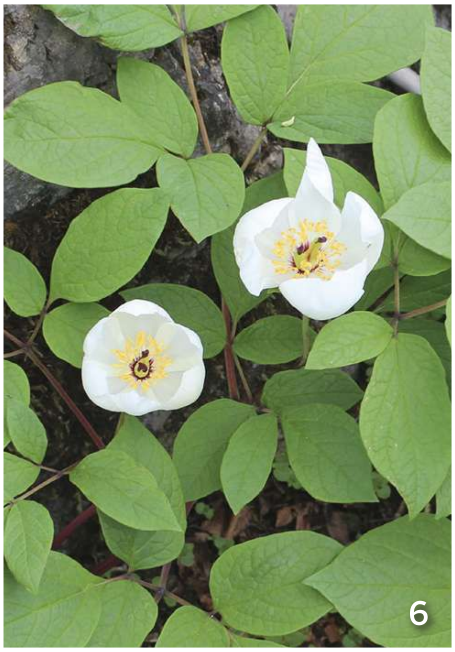

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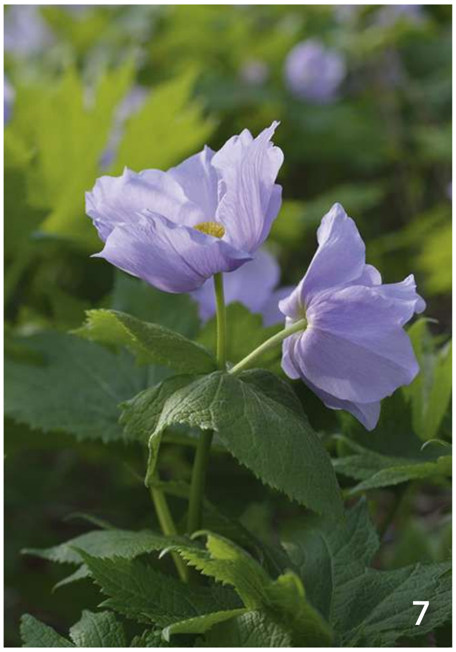

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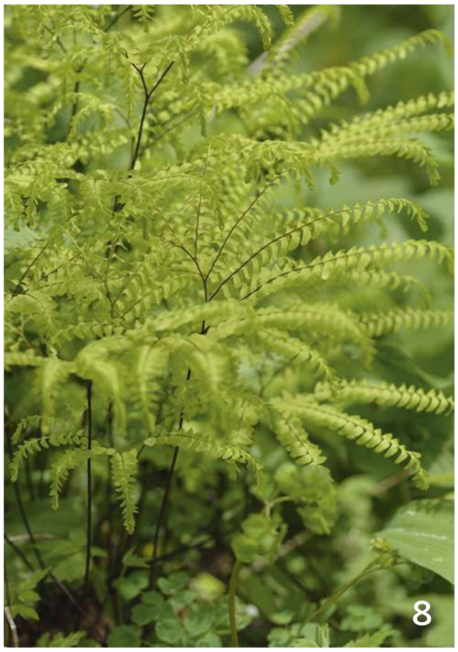

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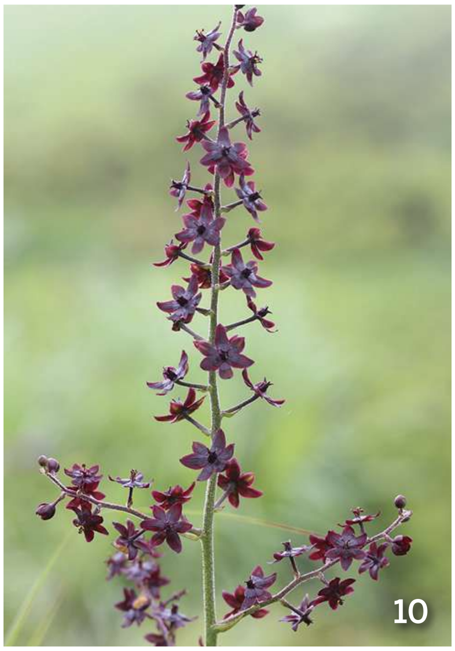

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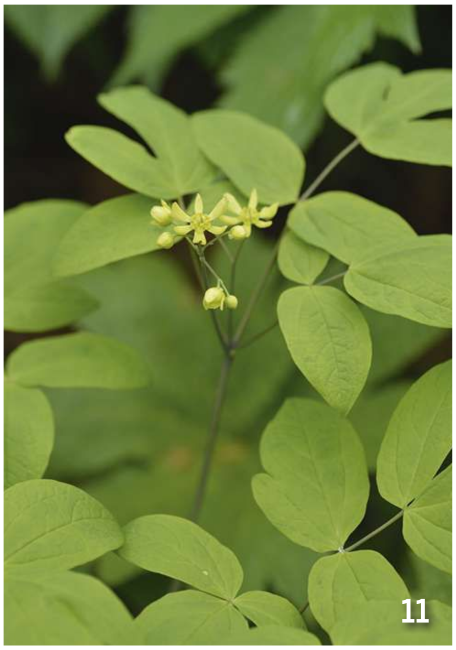

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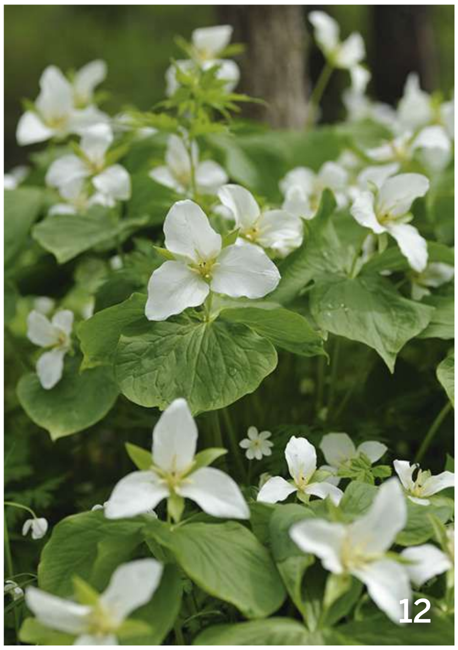

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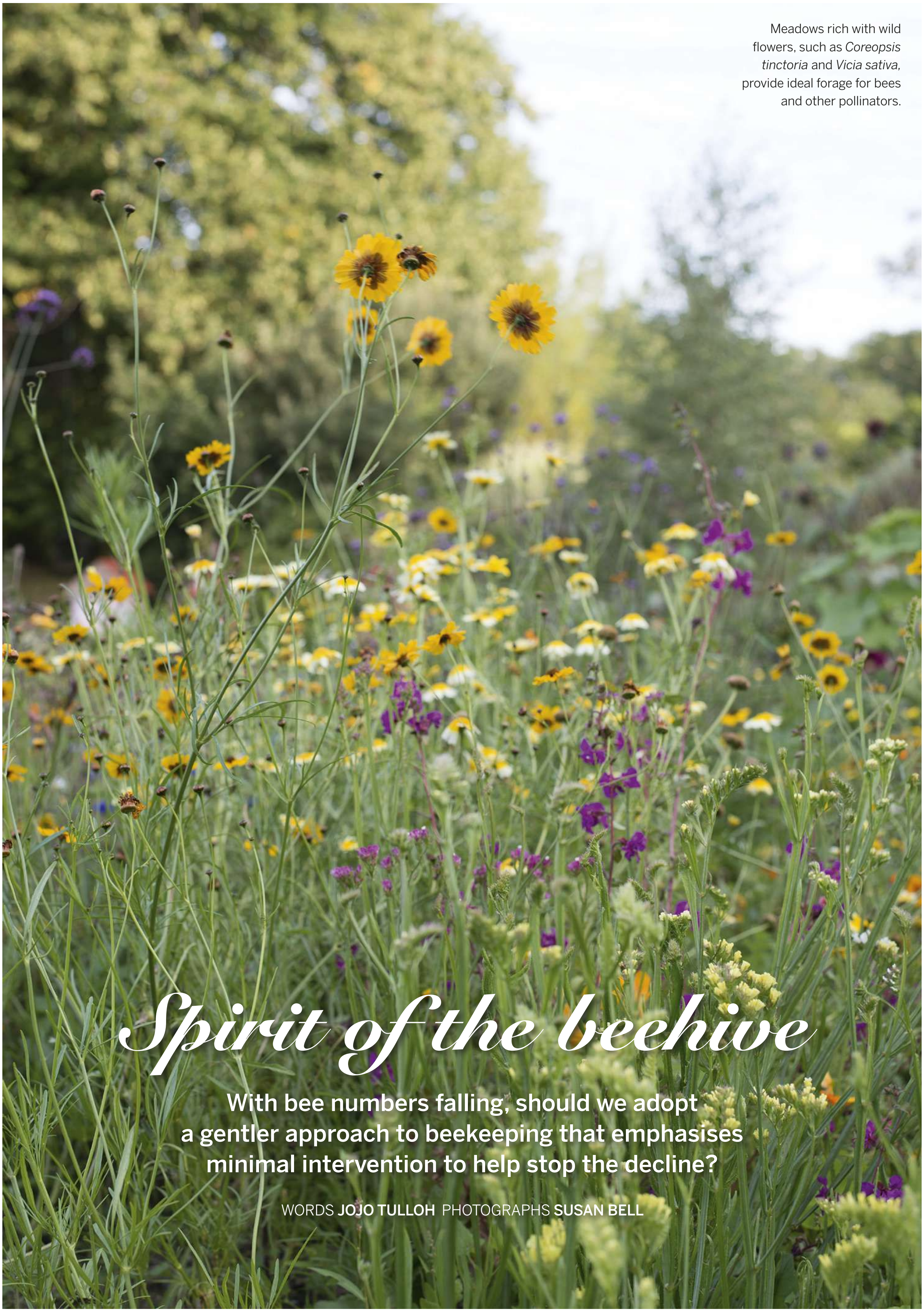
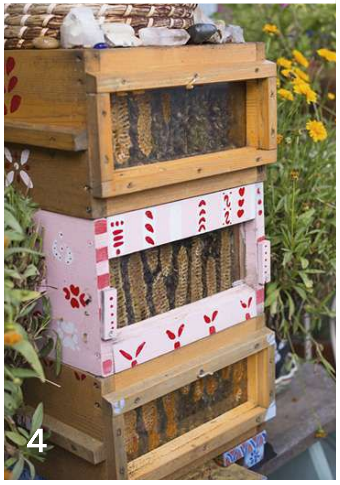


Meadows rich with wild flowers, such as *Coreopsis tinctoria* and *Vicia sativa*, provide ideal forage for bees and other pollinators.

Spirit of the beehive

With bee numbers falling, should we adopt a gentler approach to beekeeping that emphasises minimal intervention to help stop the decline?

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** PHOTOGRAPHS **SUSAN BELL**



That the honeybee is under threat is old news. Pesticides, disease, a catastrophic decrease in habitat have all been cited as reasons for its decline. But could it also be the way we have been keeping bees that is putting them at risk? If so, the alternative could be natural, or apicentric beekeeping, which puts the health of bees first.

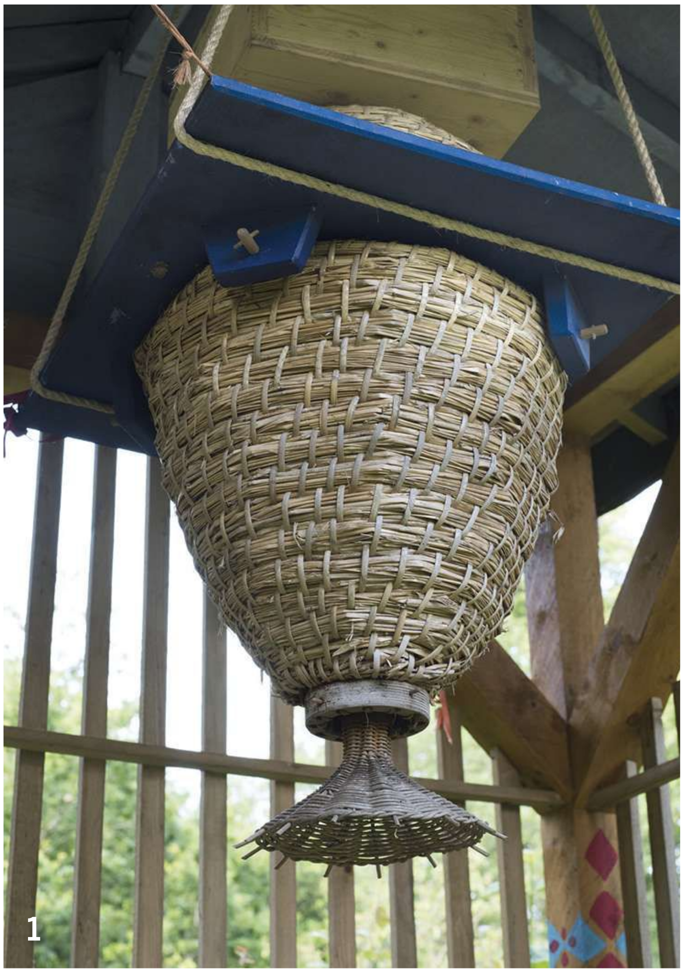
A natural beekeeper uses local bees, preferably a swarm, allows them to draw their own comb down from top bars, rear their own queens and crucially swarm to make new colonies. Natural beekeepers avoid smoking the bees and don't feed with sugar. Instead, the bees are left enough honey to survive the winter independently. All these things help the bees to use their natural physiology to promote resistance to disease and increase genetic diversity and in doing so create strong, healthy colonies. The good news is that although going on a course first is essential, natural beekeeping doesn't require a lot of time or expensive equipment and dovetails beautifully with a flower-rich, wildlife-friendly approach to gardening.

We owe the beauty and variety of our gardens to the insects that pollinate our flowers but there is another advantage. "When gardeners grow a wide range of flowers for bees, they will be rewarded with wonderful music in the garden," says Heidi Hermann, a natural beekeeper and trustee of the Natural Beekeeping Trust. I agree, there is nothing better than sitting with eyes closed and the sun on my face listening to the sound of bees droning through lavender. ▷

1 Traditional skeps, woven from straw, are used to gather swarms. These can be combined with Warré boxes to create a hive. **2** Single-petalled blooms, such as borage, are loved by bees as they provide easy access to nectar. **3** Echinacea, with its flower head, made up of multiple single florets, is a magnet for butterflies and bees. **4** A brightly painted Warré hive with panels removed to show observation windows. When decorating hives, it's important you use a natural-resin, toxin-free paint. **5** Natural beekeeper Heidi Hermann examines one of her hives. She only opens them for sporadic health checks as integrity of nest scent and warmth is key to the bees' health.

Warré hives

For a gardener who wants to become a natural beekeeper a Warré hive (see picture 4) is ideal. This vertical hive, invented by Abbé Émile Warré in the early 20th century, is cheap to make, easy to use and best of all bees thrive in it as they naturally want to build down. You open the hive very rarely, just once or twice a year, as the heat and scent of the nest are crucial to the bees' health, but you can opt for boxes with an observational window that allows you to peek in. The bees themselves will seal every crack with propolis, the resinous substance bees glean from plants. You can buy a ready-made hive from makers such as Matthew Mercy (zorbanet.com/warre/). Prices start at around £160 for a four-box hive, or £240 if you include glass observation windows. Alternatively, you can make your own. David Heaf offers plans on his website **biobees.com** and his book (see next page). You'll also need a smock with veil attached (see page 19).



▷ The gardens that host bees under the care of Heidi and other NBKT trustees are planted with perennial plants, such as *Hebe* 'Nicola's Blush', and annuals including *Calendula officinalis*. Beneath the roof of a small, open-sided wooden structure, a bit like a miniature band stand, hangs a sun hive, an egg-shaped hive comprised of two straw skeps divided by a wooden board in which the bees build circular combs. Heidi uses a combination of these sun hives, along with skeps, Warré hives (vertical hives made up of several Warré boxes, named after a French priest called Abbé Émile Warré) and German-made golden hives (rectangular one-room boxes that encourage the colony to build deep, brood nests backwards rather than down).

"I have one hive I call my PR girls," says Heidi. "They are such toughies, they have survived so long but they are also so gentle. You can sit very close and observe them without wearing a veil. The experience of watching bees is something everyone should have. My bees are my companions. I love them. I am very grateful for everything they have taught me."

Heidi came to natural beekeeping through the work of the Austrian philosopher and social reformer Rudolf Steiner, whose lectures on agriculture inspired the biodynamic movement and foretold the bee's current crisis. I discovered it by accident when among a wild garden on Hackney Marshes, east London, I came across some hand-built hives behind woven hazel fencing. These Warré hives consisted of three wooden boxes stacked on top of

1 Designed by the German sculptor, Günther Mancke, sun hives are made out of rye straw, and have nine, sickle-shaped movable frames. They're hung at 2.5m so that bees fly well above the heads of onlookers **2** This golden hive – so-called because its measurements conform to the golden ratio – is a single-room box that reduces the need to lift heavy boxes. **3** Bumblebees, such as this one feeding on a foxglove, are also important pollinators. **4** Bees and gardeners will be equally attracted by the vivid colours of bee-friendly plants such as this cosmos. **5** Honeybees receive a boost from feeding on pure honey on a simple jam-jar feeder.

Further reading

At the Hive Entrance by H Storch, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014). An essential tool for the low-interventionist beekeeper.

The Bee-Friendly Beekeeper: A Sustainable Approach by David Heaf (Northern Bee Books, 2015). A well-argued case for sustainable beekeeping with information on building a Warré hive.

The Buzz about Bees: Biology of a Superorganism by Jürgen Tautz (Springer, 2008). A highly readable, scientific account of honeybee behaviour. Available as a free download from **archive.org/details/AtTheHiveEntrance**

Honeybee Democracy by Thomas D Seeley (Princeton University Press, 2010). An engaging description of how honey bees communicate and decide on new nest sites when swarming.

Some of these titles are available at a discount from the *Gardens Illustrated* bookshop. See page 108 for details.

This mix of salvias, nasturtiums and marigolds helps to attract a host of different pollinators.

each other. I was veilless but these mellow bees posed no threat. I spent some time watching them fly, arriving at the hive with fat bags of chalky white, yellow, orange and red pollen on their legs. I went home determined to become a Warré beekeeper.

That was four years ago and the magic of the bees continues to inspire me. Although the Warré beekeeping method is sometimes derided by conventional beekeepers, across the country this gentler approach is gathering momentum. Sustainable beekeeper Tim Evans, whose hives on Hackney Marshes showed me the way, feels there is a growing symbiosis between natural and conventional beekeepers. "There is a sharing of information and an understanding that the highly intensive way is not working anymore," he says. For Tim, keeping honeybees has opened up a world of other pollinators "the joy of gardening is seeing a garden full of insects, and that should be part of the pleasure." Beekeeper and Warré hive maker Matthew Mercy, who last year sold 40 hives, agrees. "Natural beekeeper is a growing movement," he says. "Many of my customers are turning to natural beekeeping for the same reasons I converted – they are not comfortable with the intensive interference and medication."

My own bees swarmed last summer and have made a second healthy colony. That swarm is now being looked after by another natural beekeeper in east London. I have taken some honey (but only once), but for me having helped 50,000 more healthy bees survive feels like a far greater achievement than endless cupboards full of honey. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

The Natural Beekeeping Trust (**naturalbeekeepingtrust.org**) runs courses in natural beekeeping at its East Sussex base. • OrganicLea (**organiclea.org.uk**) runs a two-day introduction to sustainable beekeeping at its Hawkwood site on the edge of Epping Forest. • Find out more about Tim Evans's sustainable beekeeping at **sustainablehackney.org.uk**

Plants for bees

Agastache rugosa
Known as a 'wonder honey' plant, as some claim an acre can support 100 hives. Flowers July to September. 90cm. USDA 4a-9b[†].

Anethum graveolens
Feathery, acid-green foliage topped by larger saucers of tiny, yellow flowers, Flowers July to October. 90cm.

Crataegus monogyna
The tiny, white flowers are highly favoured by honeybees, the nectar makes a dark-amber honey that is almond flavoured. 9m. USDA 4a-7b.

Echium vulgare
A long-flowering, bushy plant with long, tubular flowers. Tolerates sun or shade. 90cm. USDA 3a-8b.

Elaeagnus angustifolia
An essential June-flowering shrub that provides much-needed nectar during the flower gap and is highly attractive to bees. 9m. USDA 3a-8b.

Eranthis hyemalis
Shiny, cup-shaped yellow flowers appear in late winter when bees are low on forage. Ideal for a woodland garden. 8cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-7b.

Lamium purpureum
Attractive to both honeybees and bumblebees. Blooms from February or earlier. 30cm. USDA 6a-9b.

Lavandula angustifolia
A plant loved by bumblebees, solitary bees and honeybees. Its essential oil may also help honeybees rid themselves of varroa mites. 1m. USDA 5a-9b.

Phacelia tanacetifolia
Bell-shaped flowers in blue-to-mauve. Highly attractive to both honeybees and hoverflies. 1.2m. USDA 7a-10b.

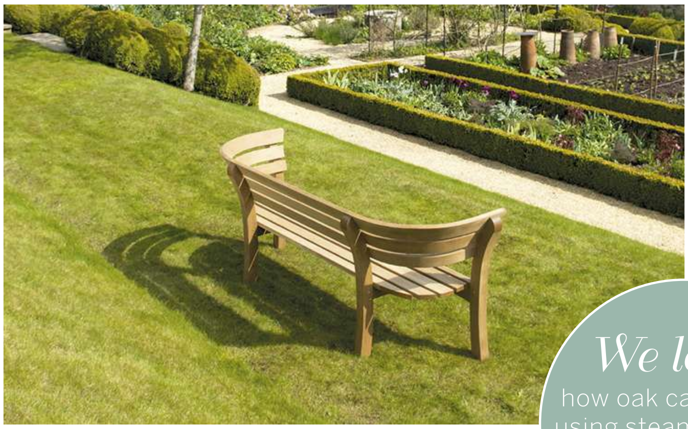
***Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'**
Dramatic, dark-purple stems intensify the colour of upright spikes of purple flowers that cover this bushy plant. 50cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.

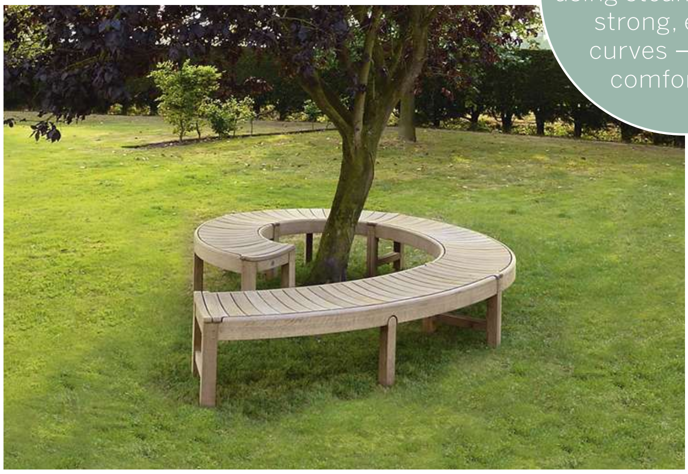
***Tithonia rotundifolia* 'Torch'**
Tall, striking plant with velvety orange florets and a deep-yellow centre. Bees love it and the seed is easy to save. Flowers summer to late autumn. 1.8m.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
[†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

Things we *Love*

Our guide to the best for 2016





Gaze Burvill

We love... how oak can be bent using steam to create strong, elegant curves – and so comfortable

Gaze Burvill make beautifully crafted oak furniture for the garden, terrace and poolside. The company only uses carefully sourced oak from sustainably managed forests, steam-bent by hand into beautifully flowing curves and uniquely shaped for outstanding comfort and style. As well as gracing the loveliest private gardens, you can see Gaze Burvill furniture in the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society, University of Oxford Botanic Garden and at Kew Gardens, among many more.

All gardens should have a simple oak seat, such as this Court Seat, which comes in different lengths, so that you can enjoy a restful moment. But you could also choose a grand dining table seating fourteen, or something more sculptural, such as a Broadwalk Spiral Bench, or even a Lizard Lounger poolside piece – awarded a prestigious Design Guildmark by the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers.

Gaze Burvill welcomes guests to visit Lodge Farm in East Tisted, Hampshire, where the craftsmen create the furniture. Open weekdays and some weekends – check the website for opening times.

Contact details

Lodge Farm,
East Tisted,
Hampshire
GU34 3QH

Tel 01420 588444

Web gazeburvill.com

National Trust

We love...
the beautiful range of heritage colours available, inspired by the South Downs.

Alitex Greenhouses

The National Trust greenhouse collection is a stunning range of greenhouses from Alitex, designers and manufacturers of the finest aluminium greenhouses. When the National Trust approached them to develop a greenhouse collection, Alitex instinctively understood what they wanted to achieve.

There are currently seven structures in the collection with the eighth greenhouse; the 'Ickworth', due to be launched at this year's Chelsea Flower Show. Each greenhouse has been carefully designed to consider a broad range of growing needs with space for productive growing and display areas.

The result is a practical, accessible and low maintenance range of greenhouses with all the timeless aesthetic qualities of an original Victorian heritage structure that will stand the test of time in your garden.

Contact details

Torberry Farm
Petersfield
Hampshire
GU31 5RG

Tel 01730 826900

Web alitex.co.uk

Email enquiries@alitex.co.uk

ALITEX™
GREENHOUSES AND CONSERVATORIES

We love...
the beauty of swimming in natural water and the feeling of being at one with nature

Gartenart Swimming Ponds

A swimming pond is a perfect combination of swimming facility, beautiful landscape feature, and wildlife sanctuary. Its shape can be formal or natural, with plants usually surrounding the swimming area or off to one side. The water is purified not by chemicals but by natural processes – the secret is in keeping the nutrient level very low so that the water stays clean and clear, just as you would find in a mountain lake.

Gartenart Swimming Ponds have been designing and building swimming ponds and natural swimming pools for 12 years. If you are interested in swimming in natural water in your own garden you can visit their website or request a brochure to find out more.

You can also sign up to visit one of their open days later in the year to experience diving into nature for yourself.

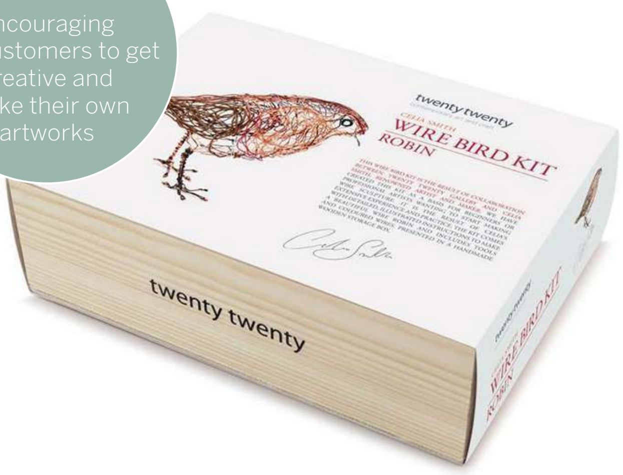
Contact details

Studio 105,
Screenworks,
22 Highbury Grove,
London
N5 2EF

Tel 020 7183 3333

Web gartenart.co.uk

We love...
encouraging our customers to get creative and make their own artworks



Twenty Twenty Gallery

Twenty Twenty has collaborated with renowned artist and maker Celia Smith to create this wire bird kit as a basis for beginners or professional artists wanting to start making wire sculpture. It contains all the materials and tools you need to make a beautiful robin with detailed illustrated instructions. Presented in a handmade wooden case, this charismatic bird will make a great gift. £49.95 + postage from www.twenty-twenty.co.uk.

Tel 01952 727952 **Web** twenty-twenty.co.uk

Natures Hampers

Based in East Sussex, Natures Hampers is a family-owned gift company offering delicious edible, and luxury pamper hampers, including ranges dedicated to golfers and gardeners. The beautifully packaged presents contain award-winning items and can arrive within 24 hours. The 'A Day in the Garden' hamper and 'Rose Sweet Treats' are long-lasting favourites. Readers can enjoy 10% off purchases in April 2016 by entering 'GARDENSILLUSTRATED' at the checkout (excluding shipping).

Tel 01435 810099 **Web** natureshampers.com

We love...
using handmade products

pure lakes
WELEDA
WILDROSE ROSE MUSQUÉE

CED Stone Group

CED Stone Group are one of the UK's leading suppliers of natural stone products and hold vast stocks across their five nationwide depots.

Stocked products range from standing stones and gravels, to cobbles and setts, to paving and walling. CED now also offer a stunning range of Emperor porcelain paving and a mixture of artificial grass, as well as a selection of ancillary products that include various mortars and grouts, CEDAedge (a versatile aluminium edging), TERRAM (a geotextile fabric to help stop those persistent weeds) and a variety of cleaning and sealing products.

CED's vast range of high quality products now means that they can supply many of your landscaping requirements. They have showrooms nationwide – including Ireland and Scotland, with their London East Showroom now open Saturday mornings from 9am-1pm.

Their staff have a vast array of knowledge and experience and if you can't find what you are looking for, they will be happy to help you source it. Not only can they advise on and help source the correct material for your project, they offer a bespoke service ensuring that products can be adapted and manufactured to suit your specific needs. Their bespoke services include: CAD drawings, bullnosing, cutting, drilling, sandblasting and cropping – ensuring that you get the exact product detail for your design.

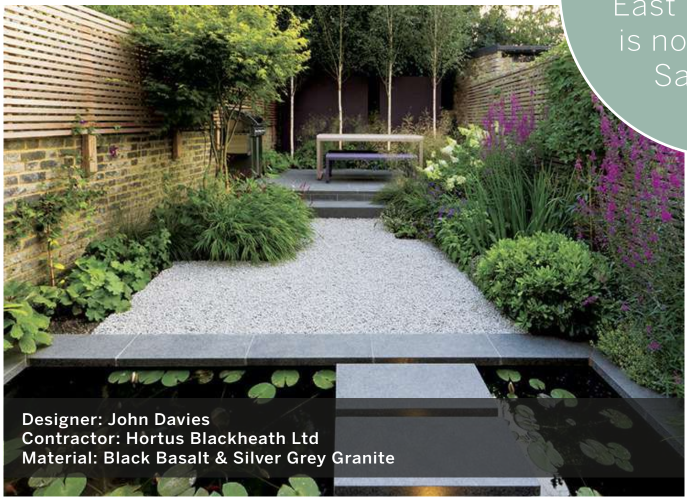
We love...
that their London East Showroom is now open on Saturdays

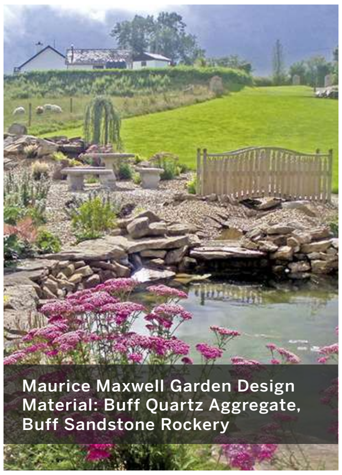
With a comprehensive material library to help inspire, CED offer free samples for all products as well as being on hand to offer free help and advice.

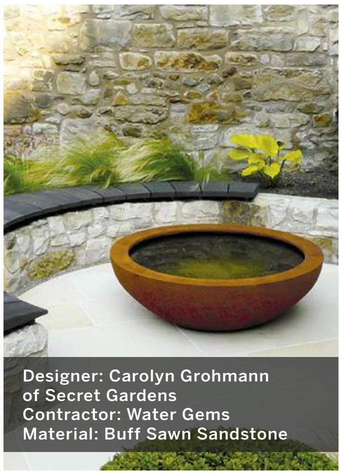
As members of a variety of trade associations including the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), you can rest assured that all their products have been sourced ethically and in compliance with the ETI's standards.

The friendly and knowledgeable staff at CED Stone Group, as well as their extensive range of stock, is what makes them our favourite stone supplier. For more information, visit their website: www.ced.ltd.uk.

Designer: Kate Gould
Contractor: The Team Landscapers
Material: Buff Sawn Sandstone


Designer: John Davies
Contractor: Hortus Blackheath Ltd
Material: Black Basalt & Silver Grey Granite


Maurice Maxwell Garden Design
Material: Buff Quartz Aggregate,
Buff Sandstone Rockery


Designer: Carolyn Grohmann
of Secret Gardens
Contractor: Water Gems
Material: Buff Sawn Sandstone

Contact details

CED LTD
728 London Road
Grays, Essex
RM20 3LU

Tel 01708 867237

Web ced.ltd.uk

Email enquiries@ced.ltd.uk

WoodBlocX Raised Beds & Planters

We love...
these easy to assemble, long-lasting and beautiful raised beds and planters

WoodBlocX is one of the UK's best-loved raised bed solutions. Quick and easy to assemble, these hardwearing structures can completely transform a garden in a relatively short space of time. The self-assembly kits can be used to create stunning outdoor focal points including raised beds and planters, ponds, seating, retaining walls and kerbing.

WoodBlocX can be built on grass, paving, concrete, soil or tarmac and there is no need for foundations. Each kit includes lightweight wooden pieces, specially treated making them extremely strong and able to withstand the toughest weather conditions, plus strong dowels and wedges that fuse everything securely in place. The kits contain everything you need to build your structure so there is no waste or any need to cut the wood.

Kits are available in a range of sizes and shapes including curves and angles. The team also offers a FREE design service for all customers. WoodBlocX kits are guaranteed for 15 years.

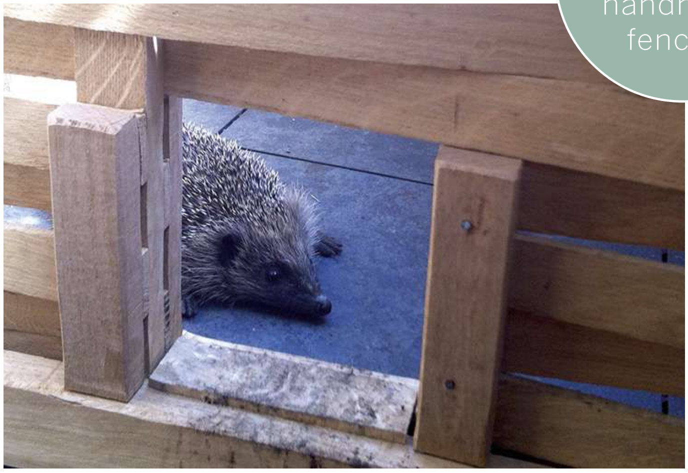
Contact details

Tel 0800 389 1420

Web woodblocx.co.uk

Email admin@woodblocx.co.uk

WOOD BlocX



Quercus

Quercus manufacture British, handmade, solid oak, hardwood fencing. The fencing is natural and requires no preservative treatments, it is wind-proof and very durable, also allowing light through and so avoiding creating shade for the plants.

Perfect to use in a historical setting, the oak fencing is also suitable for the most modern of designs. Free hedgehog holes can also be provided in the fencing if required.

Quercus' handmade fence panels are priced at £213 including VAT for a 6 x 6 panel, we stock all standard sizes and can manufacture your fencing to measure at no extra cost. We also have curved fencing, complementary planters, obelisks and trellis.

We love...
this stylish handmade fencing

Contact details

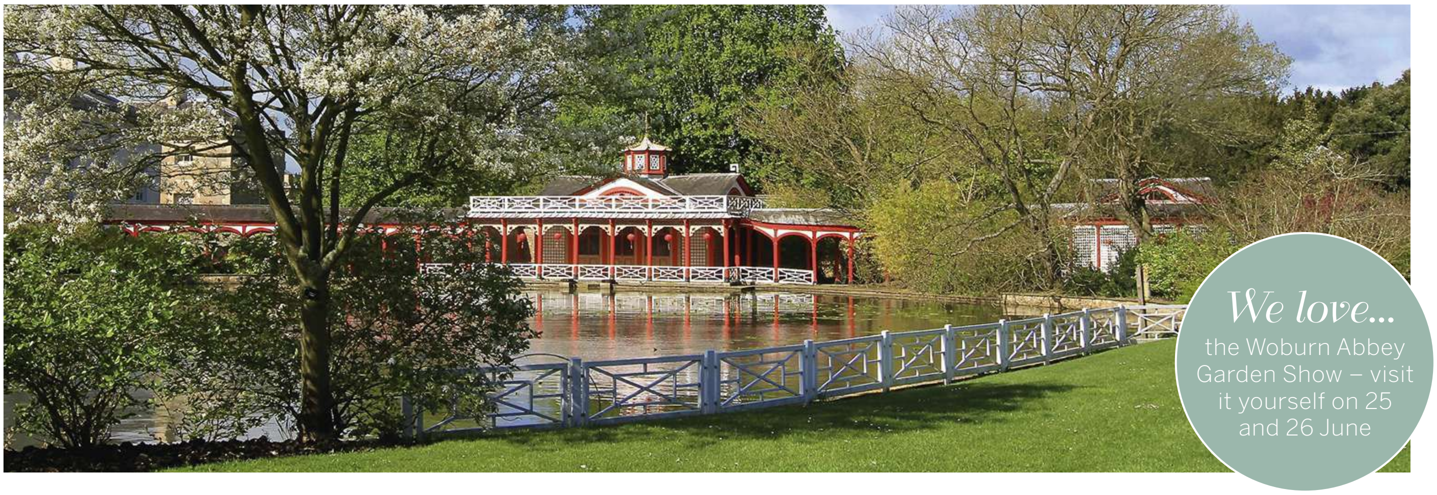
The Laurels,
Queen St,
Keinton Mandeville,
Somerset TA11 6EG

Tel 01458 223378

Web quercusfencing.co.uk

Email sales@quercusfencing.co.uk

Quercus® Fencing
Making Boundaries Beautiful



We love...
the Woburn Abbey Garden Show – visit it yourself on 25 and 26 June

Woburn Abbey and Gardens

Woburn Abbey is the family home of the 15th Duke of Bedford, set within 28 acres of award-winning, historic gardens. In 1804, the 6th Duke of Bedford commissioned Humphry Repton, the famous landscape gardener, to create designs for improving the gardens and park. Now, over 200 years later, you can see many of the original features restored in Repton's most-realised landscape and learn some of the fascinating detail from his renowned Red Book.

Discover the Chinese Dairy, which is the earliest structure of its kind in the country. Take in views of the Bog Garden, enjoy the Camellia House and see what's growing in our Kitchen Garden.

We offer gardening study days and guided tours throughout the year and don't miss the Woburn Abbey Garden Show in June.

Contact details

Woburn Abbey
and Gardens
Woburn,
Bedfordshire
MK17 9WA

Tel 01525 290333

Web woburnabbey.co.uk

WOBURN
Abbey and Gardens

2016 International Creative Lawn Stripes Competition

With winter now behind us, lawnmowers across the country are about to come out of hibernation ready to tidy lawns and return gardens to their former glory.

The quintessentially British striped lawn is idealised across the world and in celebration of this Allett Mowers, a leading British manufacturer of cylinder, walk-behind mowers – the ultimate tool for creating perfect stripes, has opened the competition internationally to find the most creative grass stripes and patterns in the world.

The competition encourages anyone with a flair for creativity and pride in their turf to enter and compete for the title, creating the most aesthetically pleasing striped turf in the world, judged by Simon Bagnall, Head of Gardens and Grounds at Worcester College, Oxford, responsible for its stunning grounds.

The winner will receive an Allett Kensington 17K lawnmower, along with the complete Allett Lawn Care System of six interchangeable cartridges consisting of an aerator, a scarifier, a lawn brush, a dethatcher, a verticutter and a 10-bladed cartridge and two stands to conveniently store the cartridges concerned. The second prize is an Allett Kensington 17K lawnmower and the third prize will be a Sandringham 14E.

We love...
beautiful striped lawns

All entries are welcome, no matter how big or small the lawn, pitch or field. We will be looking for the most creative, eye catching design that truly shows off the craftsmanship and dedication that goes into grass maintenance.

To enter the competition simply email a photograph of your creation to sales@allett.co.uk, along with your name and full address before midnight GMT on the 31 August 2016. For more information please visit the Allett Facebook page.

Contact details:

Tel 01889 271503

Web allett.co.uk

Email sales@allett.co.uk

ALLETT

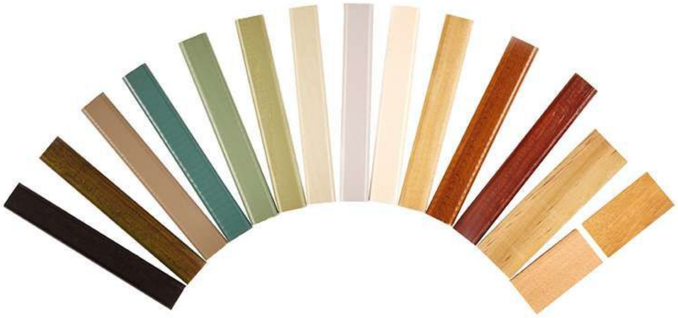
We love...
their colour sample packs which are available to order online

The Garden Trellis Company

The Garden Trellis Company started life in rural Essex in 1992, the simple idea behind the company was to manufacture quality trellis panels to enhance outdoor spaces. From their extensive workshop and design centre they continue to develop quality joinery products and offer a wide range of ready-made and bespoke garden joinery.

Their extensive online, ready-made range offers trellis panels, slatted panels, decorative fencing, planters, pergolas, gates and bin stores. The bespoke service offers the most desirable and distinctive garden schemes and they are proud to work with leading landscape gardeners and designers across the UK.

All of their products are available in natural timber or alternatively can be pre-painted or stained with a durable and colourful finish in a range of attractive garden colours.



The fabulous colour sample packs

Contact details

355A Old Road,
Clacton-on-Sea,
Essex CO15 3RQ

Tel 01255 688361

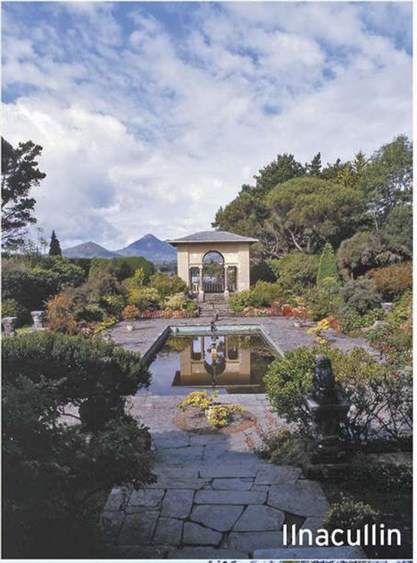
Web gardentrellis.co.uk/garden

Email info@gardentrellis.co.uk

The GARDEN TRELLIS Co.
Est. 1992
Crafted garden joinery

Highgrove House

Like minded travellers


Ilnacullin

Munstead Wood

Babylonstoren Garden

Quality Garden Tours

The Landscape Gardens of Capability Brown
Departures: Apr 29, Jun 24, Sep 30, 2016
Three nights' half board from £495pp

The Legacy of Gertrude Jekyll
Departures: May 29, Jun 5, 2016
Six nights' half board from £965pp

Highgrove and the Cotswolds
Departures: May 4, Jun 10, Aug 12, 22, Sep 2, 2016*
*September date subject to confirmation
Three nights' half board from £465pp

In an Irish Garden
Departures: Jun 23, Aug 11, 2016
Seven nights' half board from £1195pp

Gardens of North Wales
Departures: Jun 9, Sep 1, 2016
Three nights' half board from £395pp

Gardens and Wild Flowers of South Africa's Western Cape
Departures: Aug 25, Sep 11, 2016
15 nights from £4,295pp

Sri Lanka: The Pearl of the Indian Ocean
Departures: Oct 13, 2016
12 nights from £2,875pp

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design

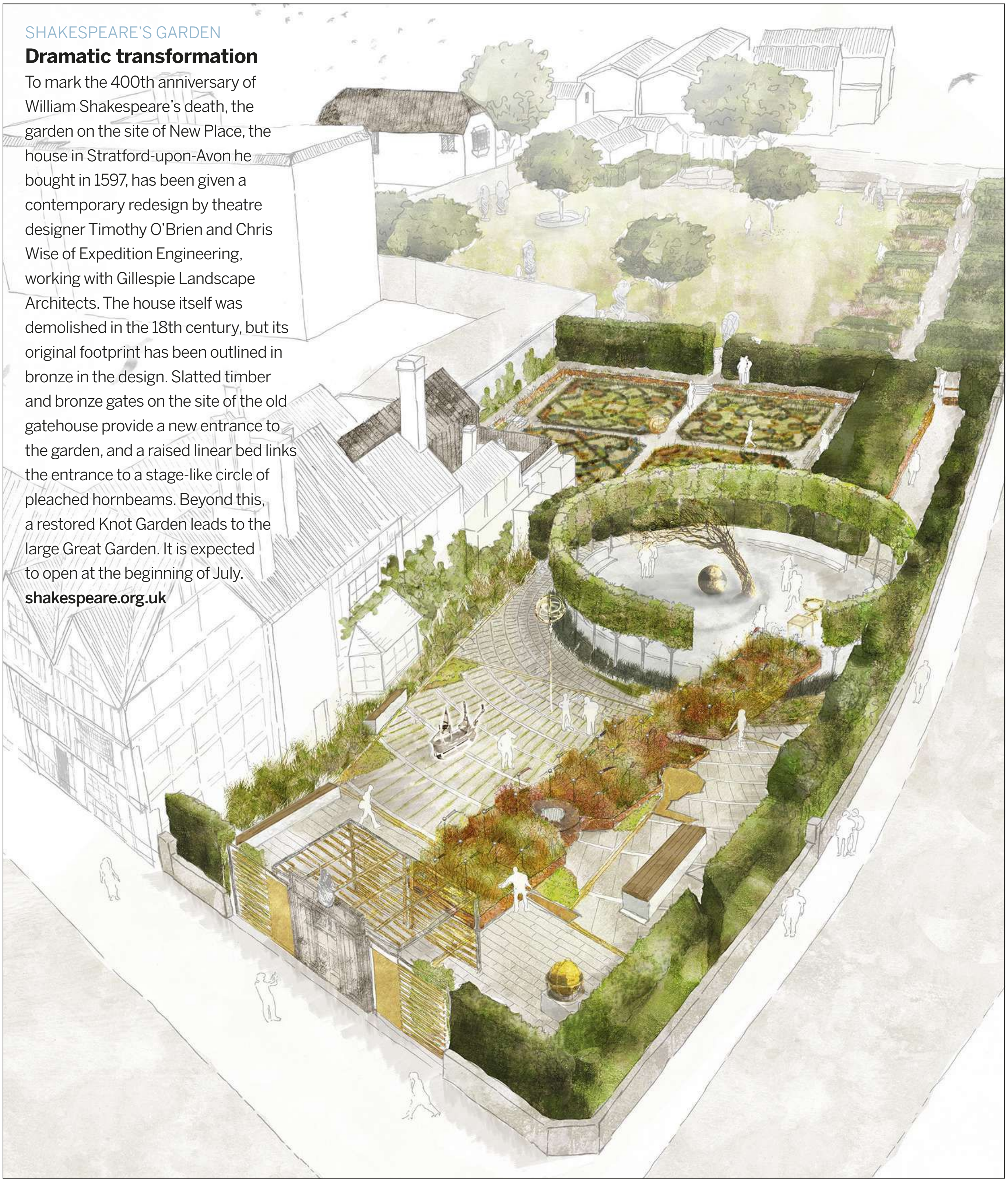
Design update, ideas and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

SHAKESPEARE'S GARDEN

Dramatic transformation

To mark the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, the garden on the site of New Place, the house in Stratford-upon-Avon he bought in 1597, has been given a contemporary redesign by theatre designer Timothy O'Brien and Chris Wise of Expedition Engineering, working with Gillespie Landscape Architects. The house itself was demolished in the 18th century, but its original footprint has been outlined in bronze in the design. Slatted timber and bronze gates on the site of the old gatehouse provide a new entrance to the garden, and a raised linear bed links the entrance to a stage-like circle of pleached hornbeams. Beyond this, a restored Knot Garden leads to the large Great Garden. It is expected to open at the beginning of July. **shakespeare.org.uk**



© SHAKESPEARE'S NEW PLACE.

The
ENGLISH GARDENING SCHOOL
— CHELSEA —

Long established as the leader in all design and gardening tuition and based at the unique and historic Chelsea Physic Garden

ONE YEAR GOOD GARDENING DIPLOMA COURSE
September 2016 – June 2017
Covers the best in planting design while training in the more serious aspects of horticultural techniques. Working sessions at Sissinghurst with head gardener Troy Smith and lectures by many leading gardening personalities. Regular visits to outstanding private gardens.
(1 day a week (Tues), 10.00am–3.15pm, over three 10 week terms)

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Covers all you need to know in this diverse subject, including TWO real design projects and CAD tuition. Drawing skills, estimating, plant knowledge, water features, garden lighting and visits to the work of leading designers with Rosemary Alexander and other tutors.
(3 days a week in school, 10.00am-3.15pm, plus 2 days homework)

GARDEN DESIGN & CARING FOR YOUR GARDEN
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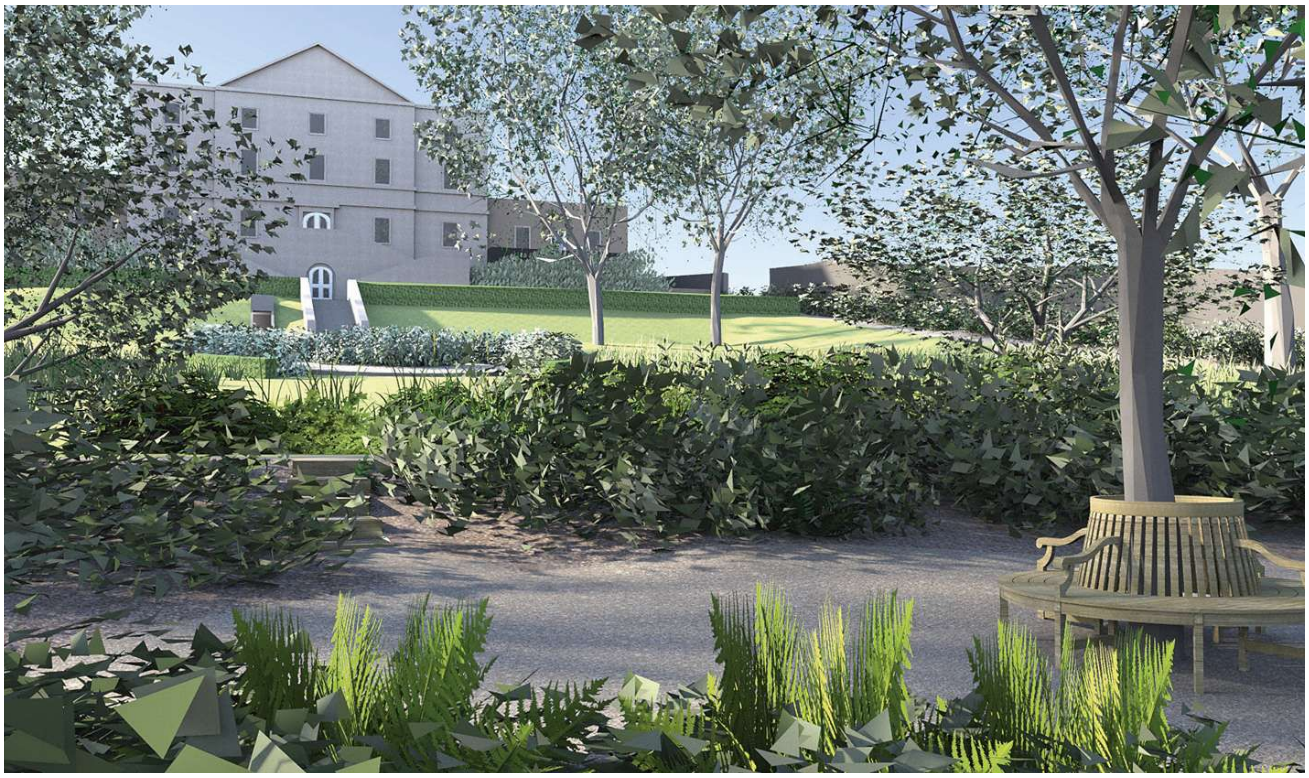
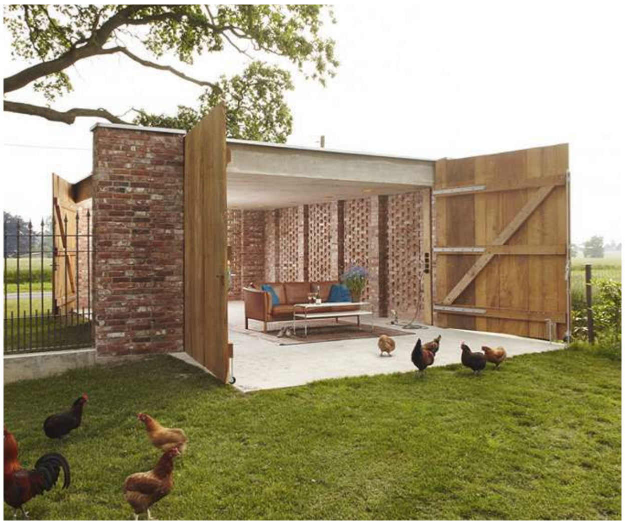
RESTORATION

University challenge

Historic gardens surrounding one of the University of Bristol's halls of residence, Clifton Hill House, are getting a makeover, thanks to a £35,000 funding boost from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The new design, by Nicola Greaves, will have a naturalistic feel, with a wildflower meadow and woodland walk. The Palladian-style house, completed in 1750, is one of the most important surviving examples of work by the architect Isaac Ware. For information on the garden and volunteering visit **universityheritagevolunteering.org.uk**





AWARD

Out to impress

A German building, which serves as a car port in winter and a loggia in summer, was recently named Outbuilding of the Week by online gardening magazine *Gardenista*. Designed by Wirth Architekten, the ingenious structure has been largely made using recycled materials, such as clay bricks recovered from a farmhouse destroyed by fire, and has wide doors made out of oak from a tree felled by lightening. **gardenista.com**

WINDOW DRESSING

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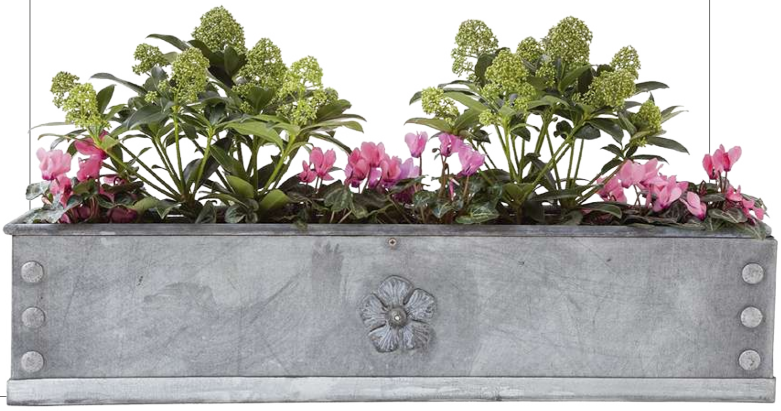
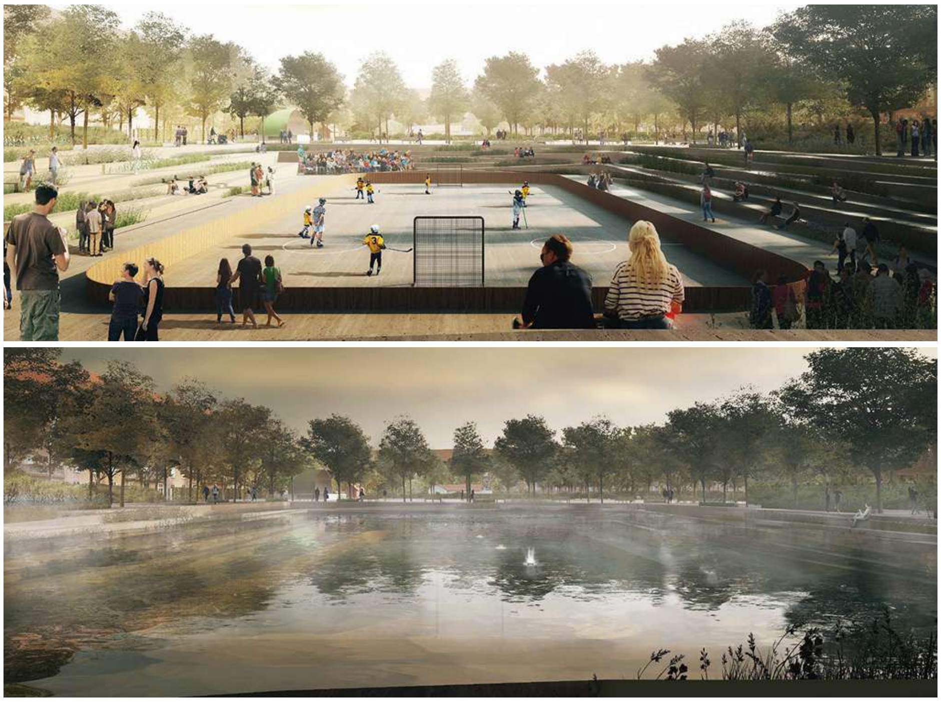


CHRISTIAN BURMESTER, NICOLA GREAVES LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS



REDEVELOPMENT

Pooling resources

Water management is at the heart of plans by landscape architects Tredje Natur to re-landscape Enghaveparken in Copenhagen. The Danish capital flooded badly in 2011 and 2014, and new plans will help the public park adapt to the effects of climate change. A dyke will run round the perimeter, filtering water around the park and into 100 nearby community gardens. Sunken spaces, which can be used for sports when it is dry, will act as temporary pools when it rains. **tredjenatur.dk**

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FUNDRAISING

Artful recreations

In around 1750 the actor David Garrick gave his friend William Hogarth a pair of elegant lead urns for his new home. Now the William Hogarth Trust is offering high-quality Jesmonite replicas of the urns to help fund a new exhibition garden and learning centre at that house. The urns, decorated with swags of fruit and lions' heads, once topped the gate piers of the Grade I-listed house in Chiswick where the painter and his wife lived from the 1750s. The replicas, which stand 81cm high, cost £895 each, plus delivery, and are available from the Trust. Email info@williamhogarthtrust.org.uk for more information.

Notebook

- The Outdoor Office, a joint design by finalists of the Young Designer of the Year, will form part of the **RHS London Spring Extravaganza**, showing how plants can be used to liven up office spaces. 1-2 April, Lindley Hall and Lawrence Hall; 10am-5pm. rhs.org.uk
- **The Roof Gardens** in Kensington High Street, London, is hosting a talk by Nigel Dunnett on the re-planted roof gardens at the Barbican and the planting of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. 17 April, 9am-12pm. £10 for members of the Gardening Club, £15 non members. For tickets email gardeningclub@roofgardens.virgin.com
- Discover **Angela Conner**'s large-scale kinetic sculptures in a new interactive book *Angela Conner* (Elizabeth Beecher Publishing, £5.49), which features videos that bring the works to life. Available from the iTunes store.
- Landscape historian Dr Oliver Cox will be speaking on the subject of **Clumps and concrete: 300 years of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown** at the Royal Geographical Society, London on 26 April, 7pm. £20. Tel 020 7251 8142, capabilitybrown.org
- The remarkable **Garden of Cosmic Speculation** designed by Charles Jencks and the late Maggie Keswick, at Portrack House, Dumfriesshire, will open for Scotland's Gardens and Maggie's Cancer Care Centres on 1 May, 12pm-5pm. Tickets at the gate only. scotlandsgardens.org

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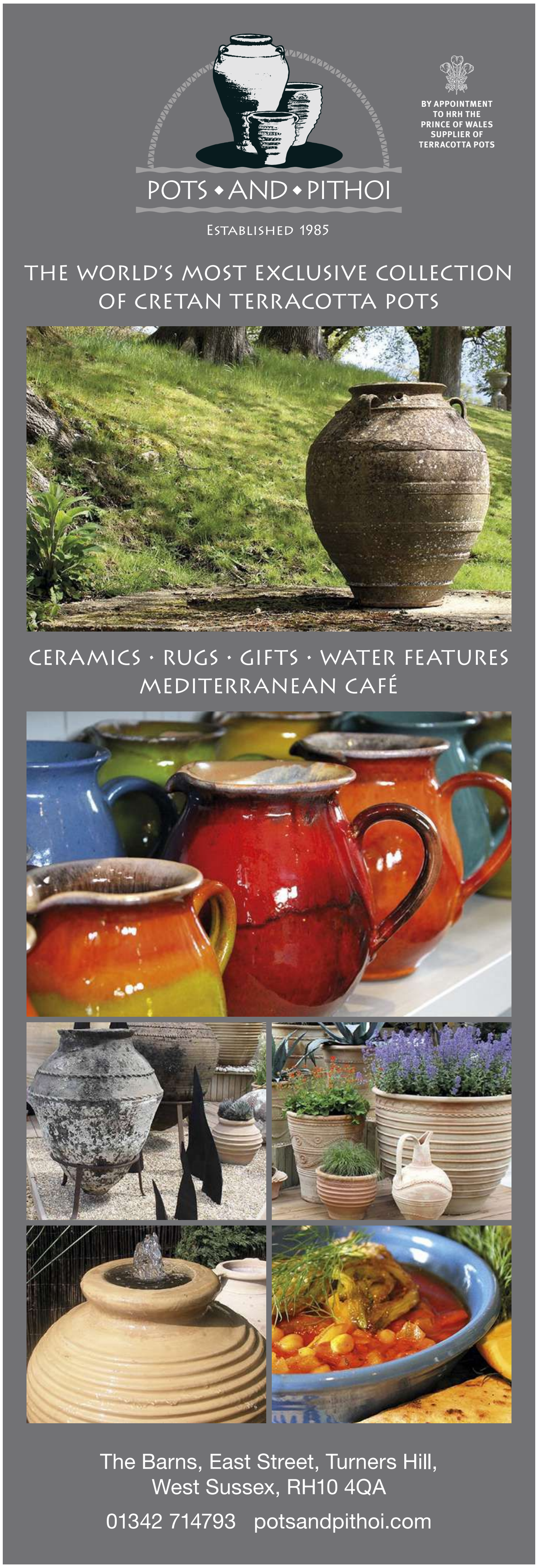
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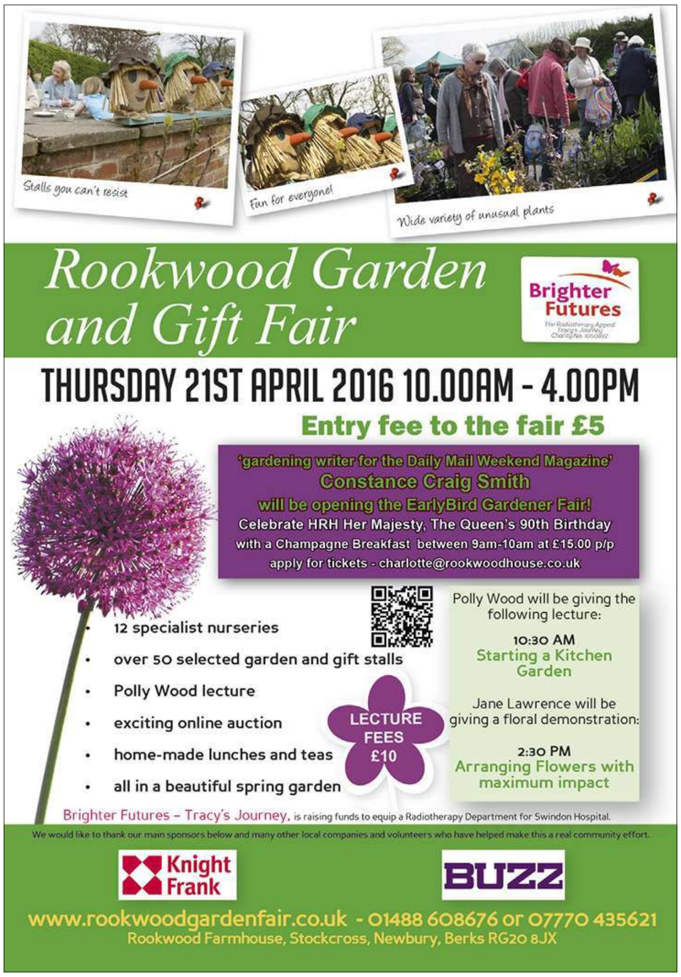

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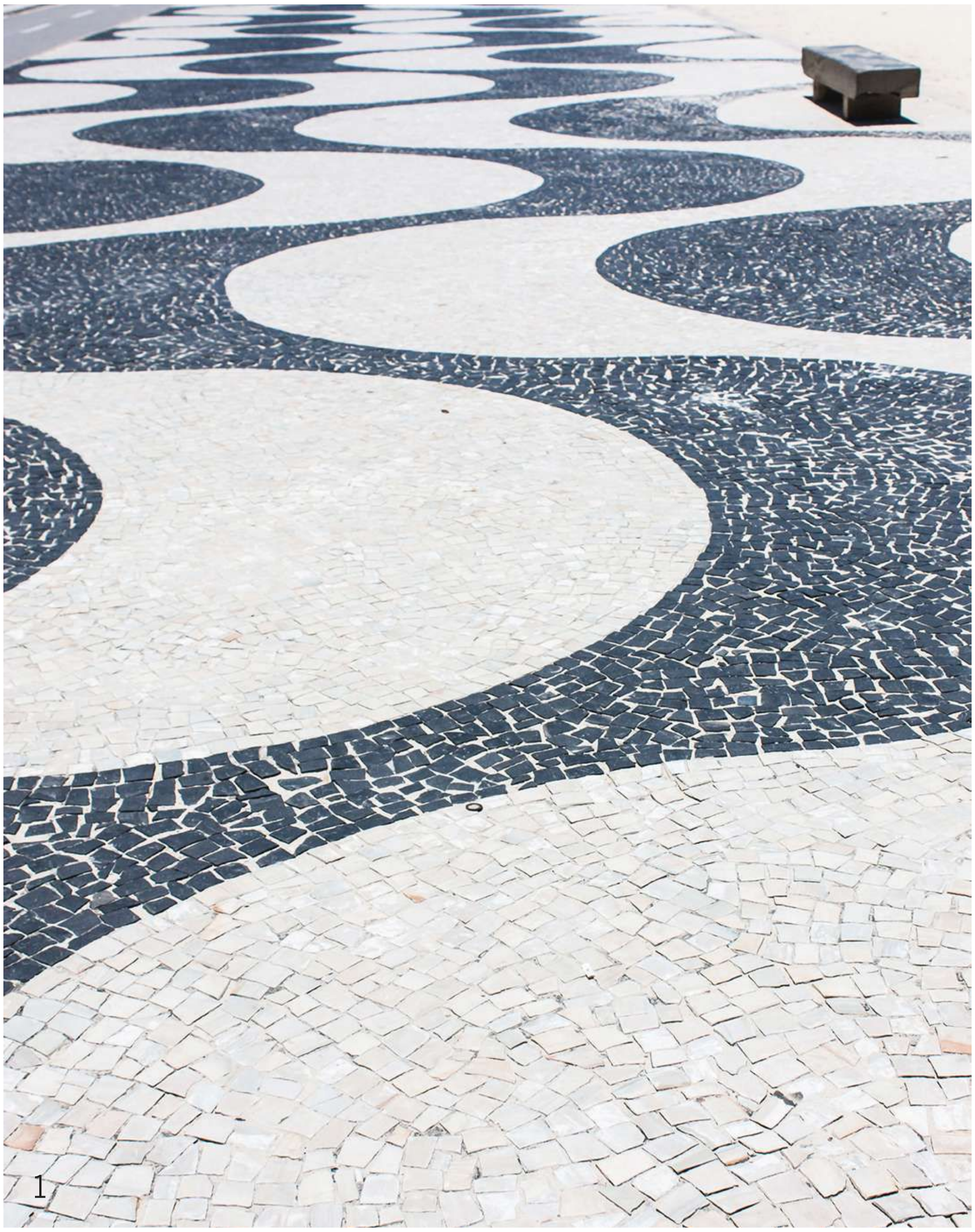
1 Modern art
Copacabana Beach front is famous for Roberto Burle Marx's patterned mosaic walk. It stretches – unbroken for nearly three miles – along the entire length of the beach. The ever-changing views are regularly punctuated by graphic groupings of palm trees and variations in pattern. Burle Marx's influential, abstract style also extended to planting; he would often mass native Brazilian plants in interlocking patterns that emphasised contrasts in foliage texture and colour.



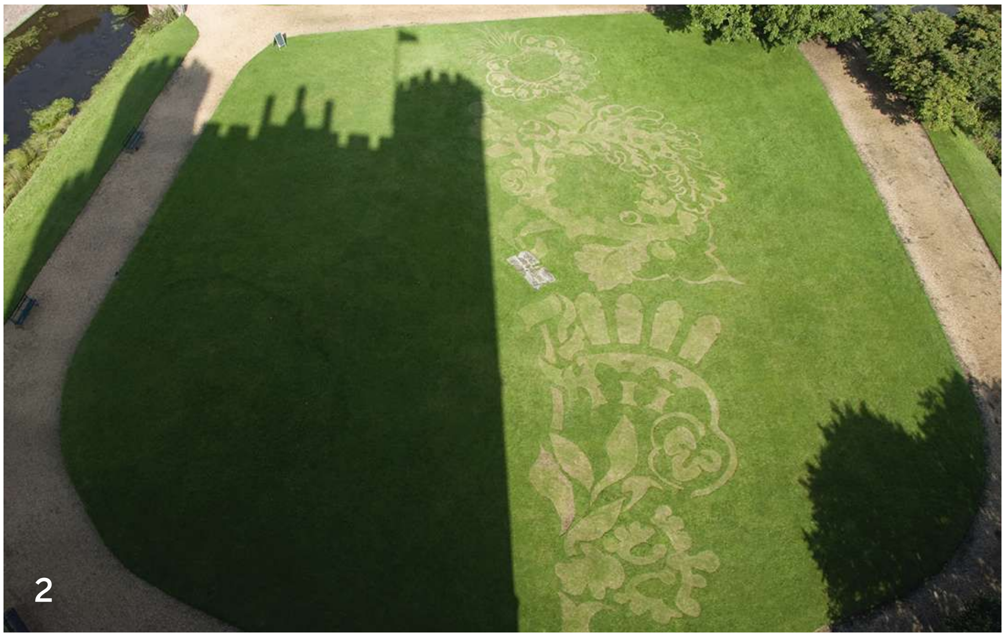
PERSEOMEDUSA / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Sarah Price is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who won worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 Olympic Park.

Pattern

Introducing elements of pattern into a garden, whether through structural plants or hard landscaping, can help breathe life into your design

WORDS SARAH PRICE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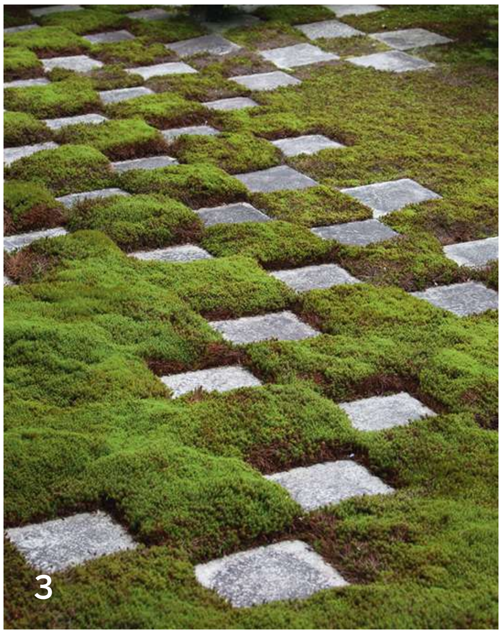
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2 JULIAN HUGHES; 3 JEREMY SUTTON-HIBBERT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; 4 DON JOHNSTON_ON / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

2 Making a mark

Textile artist, Linda Florence referenced ornate knot gardens on this lawn installation at Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire. The floral patterns were drawn and cut by hand over a period of five days. As the grass grew, the pattern slowly disappeared. In some areas the grass grew back stronger than before resulting in the pattern becoming embossed into the grass.

3 Setts square

Simple ground patterns can create compelling garden scenes. Granite flagstones form an irregular chequerboard pattern across a sea of moss in the North Garden designed by garden designer Shigemori Mirei at Tofuku-ji temple, Tofukuji, Kyoto, Japan. The limited palette of considered materials brings clear legibility to the composition.

4 Repetition

The vertical stems within a birch woodland form a bold repeating pattern. The grounded form of the shorter, pine trees, create a strong contrast, emphasising the clear stem patterns behind.

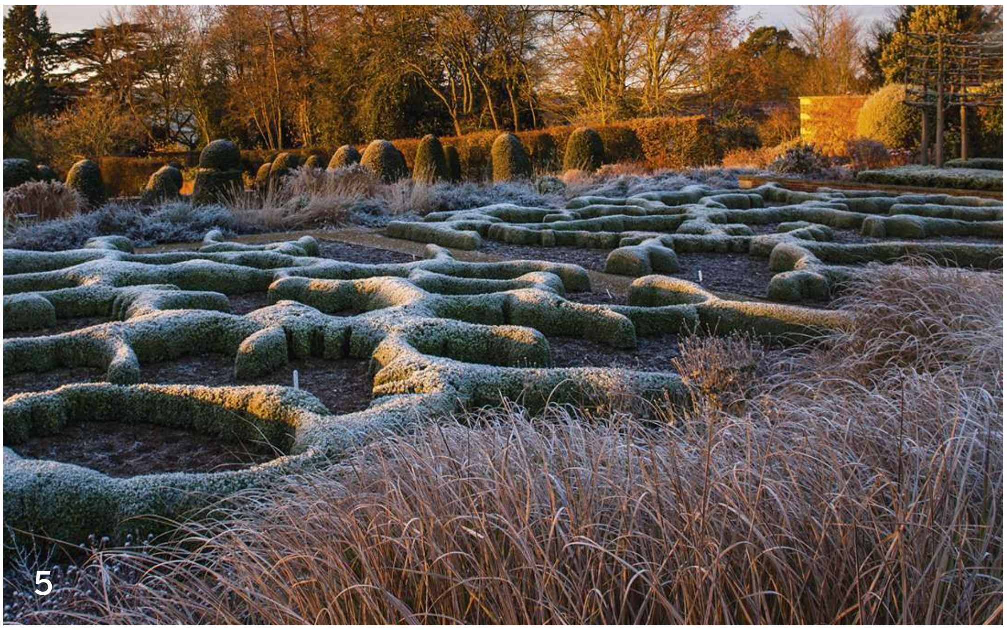
The Victorians loved patterns but for much of the 20th century the stark new-world view of Modernism saw decoration and pattern as frivolous and backward-looking. Finally, the pendulum has swung back and ornamentation is now a resurgent force in visual culture, from Beijing's breathtaking National 'Bird's Nest' Stadium to the elaborately patterned colouring books for grown-ups that top the bestseller lists.

Decorative art is also transforming the profile of many of our contemporary buildings and cityscapes. Made possible by new design and fabrication techniques, the use of ornament in architecture creates unexpected and stimulating results: bold paving or tile formations that snake through city centres, brick façades that twist the standard brick module to protrude in patterned eruptions from an otherwise ordinary wall and buildings with elaborate doily-like cladding. The play of light and shadow brings patterns to life, whether the changing direction and intensification of natural light or illumination from within.

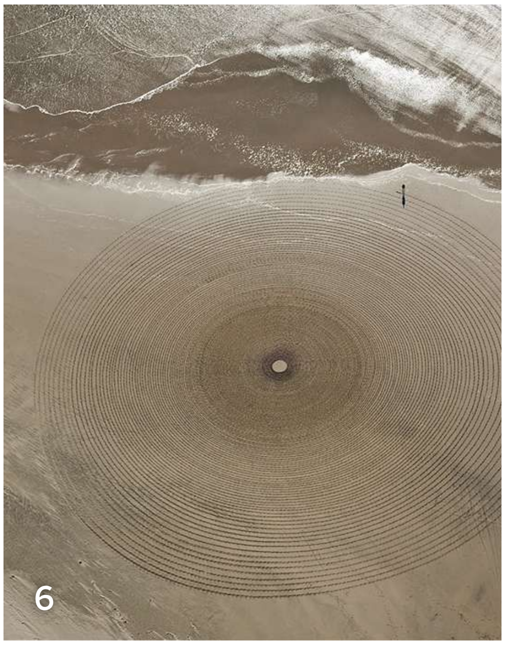
Grey urban spaces may offer the ultimate setting for bold and brilliant patterns. Hip architects StudioWeave used standard decking boards to transform London College of Fashion's roof top into a garden. The only site access was through a tiny lift – just large enough to transport the low-cost, off-the-shelf larch decking. It was cut and stained in happy, loud colours – pink, sky-blue, white and deep navy – and, befitting to a textile college, configured in a basket weave pattern, which rises to form seats and planters.

Kinnear Landscape Architects has also had fun with pattern. It has etched giant floral scrolls into a concrete play plaza in Normand Park, west London. Elsewhere, gold, pink and brown mosiac benches

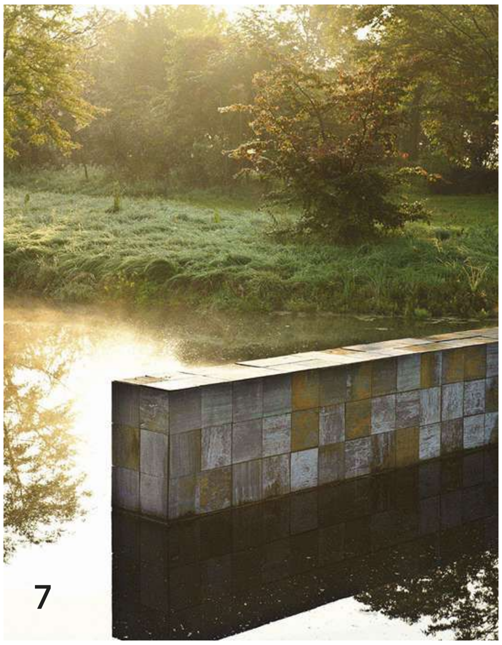
▷



5 Shape and form
The microscopic cellular structure of beech, ash and oak leaves informed the abstract pattern of this box parterre at Broughton Grange Garden designed by Tom Stuart-Smith. Ornamental grasses and varied forms of hedging create a contemporary backdrop contrasting with the intricacy of the parterre.



6 Rake's progress
Land Artist Jim Denevan draws on a colossal scale creating huge, impermanent installations that eventually become eroded by waves or the weather. This spiral was drawn in the sand with a landscape rake. The patterns he creates owe much of their beauty to their scale and setting.



7 Subtle variations
This low wall could easily look incongruous within the wild garden setting, but designer Luc Engelhard introduces just enough detail in these azobe wood tiles to creating an alluring scene. Some of the wood came from a weir, and iron in the water has given it a warm, rusty red colour. Subtle variations in the wood's patina work well with the colours and textures of nature.

5 JAMES KERR; 6 BARCROFT USA / GETTY IMAGES; 7 JAN VAN WIJK

▷ bring sparkle to a square in Colchester's St Botolph's Quarter, reflecting the site's history as a mosaic workshop in Roman times.

Tom Stuart-Smith's garden for the Keeper's House restaurant at the Royal Academy of Arts draws on strong forms of overlapping *Dicksonia antarctica*. Tightly packed together in a canyon-like space, these tree ferns thrive out of reach of direct light, their verdant, arching fronds resembling tropical-style 1970s wallpaper.

Equally spectacular are the rough parasols of 'giant rhubarb', *Gunnera manicata*. Designer Jinny Blom was so inspired by the scale and pattern of its foliage that she repeatedly cast the leaves in marble dust to create reliefs. These were discretely framed in bronze and hung in frieze-like repeating panels on the walls of Skye Gyngell's restaurant Spring at Somerset House, London. If you haven't the moist conditions to grow *Gunnera* but you want the drama, try the crimson-tinted *Rheum palmatum* 'Atrosanguineum' or the slightly more compact *Rheum* 'Ace of Hearts' for a smaller space.

Closer to the ground, the heart-shaped leaves of epimediums form intricate tapestries, the perfect foil to lacy ferns and drifts of emerging woodland bulbs. The secret is to plant boldly in numbers generous enough so that the patterns are legible even in dull low light. Use the plants to create balanced garden pictures; a mass of *Thalictrum delavayi* 'Album', with its delicate, three-pinnate foliage and spangles of tiny, white flowers, creates a busy detail that needs an even-textured and dark backdrop, such as yew, to let its beauty shine.

I like to design plant-immersed gardens; self-contained worlds where the soft landscape dominates and runs directly up to the boundaries of the site. Patterns of hard landscaping frame the planting, while influencing how people move through and

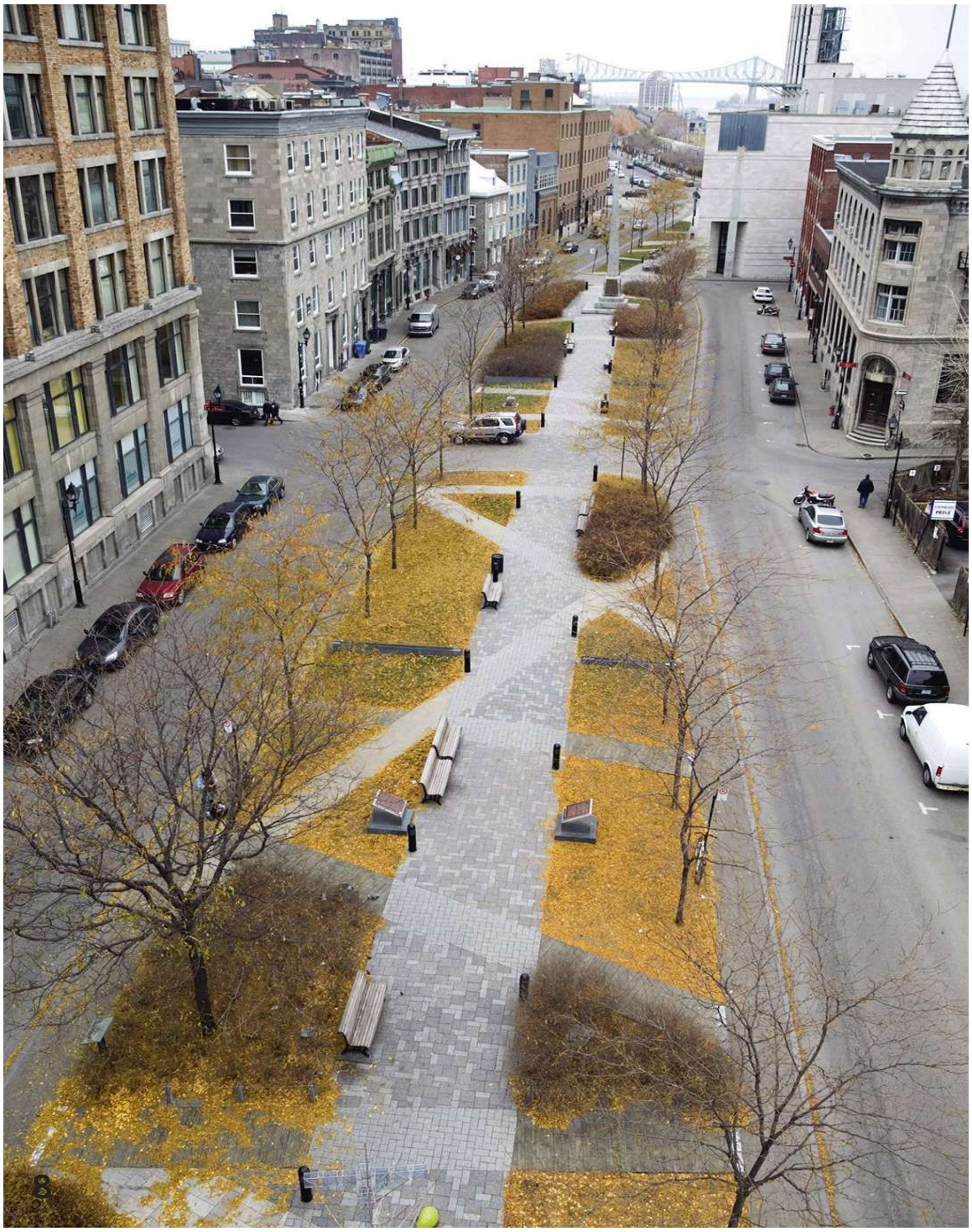


IMAGE BY JEAN-FRANÇOIS VÉZINA

8 Crossing the line

Conceived as a 'quilt of pedestrian walkways', the highly detailed paths at Place d'Youville in Montreal, Canada, are formed from patterns of wood, concrete, granite and limestone. The diagonal patterns of the pathways are based on the way people cross the space. The benches and greenery encourage you to sit and dwell a while. This design by Claude Cormier + Associés relies on a grand scale but the ideas would still work on a smaller scale, just with a more limited palette of materials.

Further reading

Gardens of Persia by Penelope Hobhouse (WW Norton & Company, 2009). A beautiful book that transports you through Persian culture's 5,000-year-old history of garden development. Their use of pattern in the composition of their gardens and detail is aesthetically sublime and spiritual.

Also take a look at some of the case studies on Landezine (**landezine.com**), where pattern dominates, whether in inventive paving, planting or design compositions.

experience the space. A snaking arrangement of hexagonal paving blocks will slow us down and draw our eyes to small-scale details on the ground; the interwoven growth of viola and mosses for example. A wide stretch of bound gravel encourages faster, freer movement. Highly textured or visibly grained materials, such as wood, slow the apparent flow of space visually.

When designing paving there are almost infinite variations. The key is to know what you want to achieve. For a smart, minimal look, use sawn-edge, honed, natural stone pavers of equal size (the bigger the better) and lay them closely jointed. For a more rustic look, perhaps in a historic setting, consider cropping the edges of sawn stone and varying the unit sizes. In a contemporary context I will often specify the gauge widths of sawn-flags (say courses of 300mm, 450mm and 600mm wide) to make it easier to lay. However, I usually break up this order by asking for random lengths; a specification that minimises waste during the cutting process by maximising the use of each block of stone out of the quarry. An element of randomness will also emphasise a stone's natural origins.

I enjoy working with reclaimed materials but they're becoming harder to source and more expensive. On a recent project in a disused Baptist chapel, in Abergavenny, I 'upcycled' discarded stones lying around the site. I rearranged them in an intricate pattern, laying broken pieces of local stone on their edge so they flowed like jagged setts around irregular, old flagstones and arranged plantings that appeared self sown. The result was satisfyingly site-specific.

Who knows when the pendulum of taste and fashion will swing back to clean, crisp lines and surfaces? But for now I plan to enjoy the rich and wrinkly world of texture and pattern. □

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Discover clever ways to combine colour in the garden in Matt James's *How to Plant a Garden*, reviewed on page 106.

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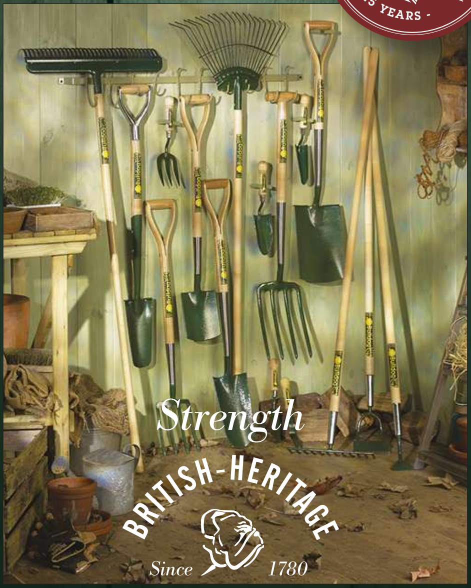

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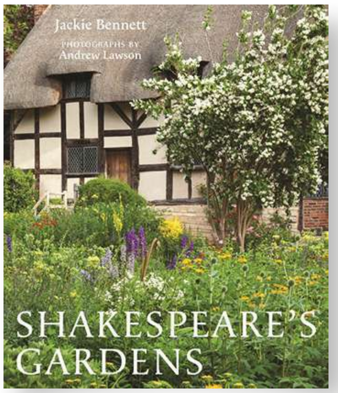


SHAKESPEARE'S GARDENS

by Jackie Bennett, photographs by Andrew Lawson

Frances Lincoln, £25
ISBN 978-0711237261

Brush up your understanding of Elizabethan plants and gardening in this beautifully illustrated tour of Shakespeare's gardens.

Reviewer Juliet Giles is production editor at Gardens Illustrated.

Gardens may not be the first thing most of us associate with William Shakespeare, but the link is not as tenuous as it first seems for Shakespeare's plays and poems are filled with so many references to plants and gardens that it's not too hard to imagine he had more than a passing interest in the subject. But there's the rub, because we know so little about the Bard's life (let alone his gardening habits), every book about him inevitably owes more to the imagination than hard fact.

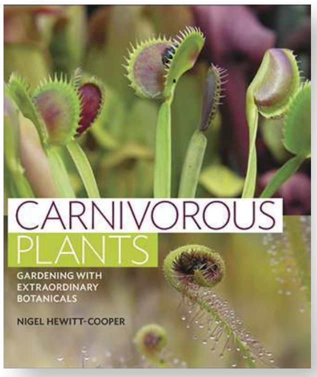
It's a shortcoming author Jackie Bennett owns up to in her introduction, but despite having a leading man who spends so much of the story offstage, she manages to weave a fascinating narrative of his world and works, encompassing everything from Elizabethan cures for syphilis to the Jacobean fashion for mulberry trees – all beautifully illustrated with both Andrew Lawson's photography and carefully chosen archive illustrations, including plates from John Gerard's *Herball*.

Bennett also reveals how the eponymous gardens – mostly in and around Stratford-upon-Avon, and now cared for by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust – have evolved in the years since the playwright's death. How in the 1920s Ellen Willmott (of Miss Willmott's ghost fame) created the cottage garden for Anne Hathaway's cottage, and how George V and Queen Mary donated roses for the Knot Garden, designed, again in the 1920s, by the Tudor historian Ernest Law for Shakespeare's final home at New Place.

There are still some annoying gaps not least where New Place, his final home, once stood. Demolished in the 18th century, it's now the site of a new garden [see page 91] that is due to open later this year to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Too late for to be included in this book, which is a shame.

Book offer

RRP £25. **Reader offer price £21.50** including p&p*.



CARNIVOROUS PLANTS: GARDENING WITH EXTRAORDINARY BOTANICALS

by Nigel Hewitt-Cooper

Timber Press, £18
ISBN 978-1604695793

A practical and exquisitely illustrated guide to carnivorous plants that is recommended for anyone, regardless of experience.

Reviewer Matthew Biggs is a garden writer and plantsman.

Carnivorous plants are often an early introduction to gardening, but not always with the anticipated degree of success. Buy this book alongside your early purchases and results will be transformed. Packed into its beautifully laid-out pages are concise practical instructions, mixed with innovative ideas and words of encouragement from Nigel Hewitt-Cooper, based on 35 years of accumulated knowledge, practical experience and enthusiasm. There are suggestions for displaying plants, both conventional and unconventional (some look beautiful in a hanging basket) and case studies from gardens, revealing their role as architectural plants, in different styles, locations and countries. There seems to be little excuse not to grow them.

The chapter Common Carnivores for Easy Growing, more than lives up to its billing with all the advice you need on six genera and how to achieve success. Each section reveals fascinating facts and histories, often correcting myths and misconceptions, with advice on essentials from composts to propagation. Advanced growers are included too, and there is similar comprehensive advice for those who relish the challenge of growing more difficult taxa.

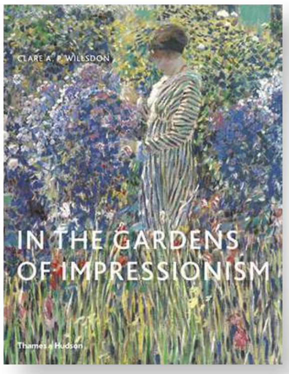
Particularly gratifying is the chapter recognising their appeal to children, with unexpected invitations to learn through touch and experimentation. There is even an accompanying list of questions for teachers, to encourage observation.

Exquisite images demonstrate the beauty and complexity of these extraordinary plants and complement the text, providing information and temptation in equal measure. Those that are slightly small are redeemed by the clarity of the image and it is fascinating to see plants in their native habitats. If you can, buy two copies: one for the coffee table and one for the garden too.

Book offer

RRP £18. **Reader offer price £16** including p&p*.

Book reviews



IN THE GARDENS OF IMPRESSIONISM

by Clare AP Willsdon

Thames & Hudson, £19.95
ISBN 978-0500292228

Elegantly and lucidly written, and blessedly free from jargon, the book explores the links between gardens and Impressionism.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is a writer and garden historian.

This beautiful book, much lauded on its first appearance in 2004, has been reissued to coincide with London's blockbuster exhibition, *Painting the Modern Garden*, and anyone with more than a passing interest in art would be well advised to read it before heading off to the Royal Academy.

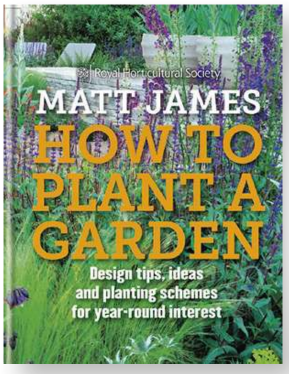
Where it excels is in providing a context for the works – social, political and cultural rather than horticultural. It reveals the links with a tradition of flower painting developed to supply decorative motifs for manufacture, and that Renoir began his career, painting flowers on to coffee cups. Turning to literature, Willsdon traces the close links between the Impressionists and both the Symbolist poets and social realists Zola and Maupassant.

These are turbulent times, encompassing the Franco-Prussian war and the Paris Commune. Garden paintings, whether of the Tuileries or doomed domestic gardens, are interpreted as gestures of protest. A sequence of paintings from Monet's garden at Argenteuil in 1874 is given a Republican reading. But gardeners may find them more interesting because they are the only ones that show Monet actually gardening.

One surprising element is the extent to which Willsdon reads the 19th century Language of Flowers into the works – dahlias denote gratitude, laburnum a spell, nasturtiums the fire of love, and so on. However, this relentless mining for meaning in every image can feel oddly beside the point. There may be more reward in ranging over the many splendidly reproduced images, observing how these painters enjoy the delicious effects of sunlight filtering through foliage, the stateliness of hollyhocks (Monet), the beauty of a cabbage (Pissarro) or pale hydrangeas glimmering in the twilight (Le Sidaner).

Book offer

RRP £19.95. **Reader offer price £17.95** including p&p*.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Design tips, ideas and planting schemes for year-round interest

HOW TO PLANT A GARDEN

by Matt James

Mitchell Beazley, £25
ISBN 978-1845339845

A step-by-step guide through the process of planning and planting a garden with well-labelled plant and garden photography.

Reviewer Jojo Tulloh is a writer and allotmenteer.

Most gardeners start from a love of plants; questions of design usually come later. Some people have an innate feeling for what should go where but for many it is a more fraught process, one they often decide to hand over to professionals. With this book Matt James, who has taught on the Garden Design degree course at Falmouth University, aims to 'demystify the planting process'. This he does in admirably logical fashion. The first chapter, Getting to Grips with Your Garden, encourages would-be designers to consider microclimates, aspect and orientation, soil, existing plants and function, ensuring there will be a sound basis for the planting decisions that come later.

James then moves on to the plant palette, devoting two double pages of well-labelled inspiring photos to each group, the best trees, hedges, shrubs, roses, climbers etc. The next section is on plants with a purpose, from privacy to noise control and soil stabilising. Then comes a chapter introducing different 'looks' with detailed lists of plants and good pictures from urban to naturalistic to gravel garden and ew perennial. All this is aimed at those without much gardening knowledge but may also serve as a refresher for the more experienced. The latter will find chapter 5 onwards more interesting with sections on elements of design and colour, following on to structure and arranging plants. For those about to hire a garden designer, chapter 7, which includes 15 different detailed planting-plans (for example a bee-friendly, modern cottage garden look, modern herbal or plants for dry shade), could save themselves a lot of money.

As an introduction to garden design this is a comprehensive and well-illustrated book pitched at a level that should suit beginners and those wishing to expand their knowledge of good garden design.

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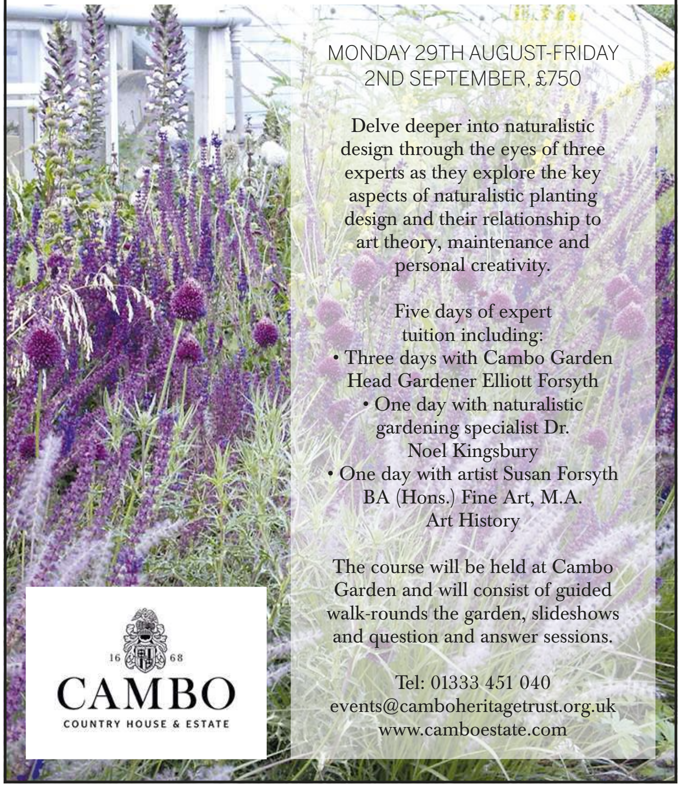

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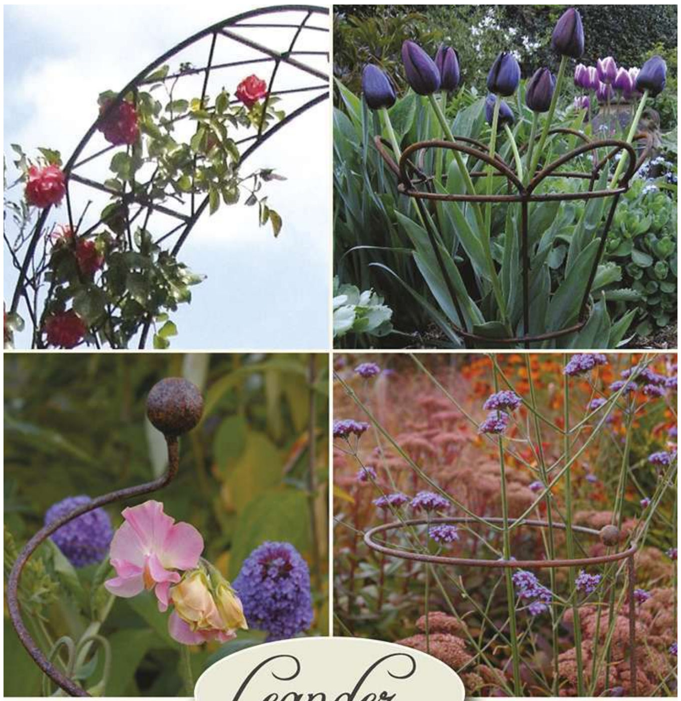

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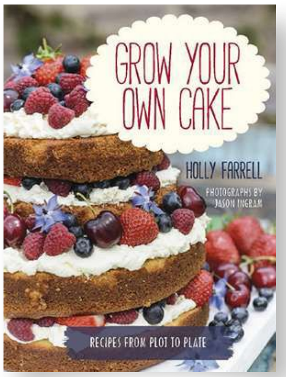


GROW YOUR OWN CAKE
by Holly Farrell,
photographs by Jason Ingram

Frances Lincoln, £16.99
ISBN 978-0711237018

A lovely, simple recipe book, perfect for anyone who wants to grow their own ingredients to use in delicious cakes.

Reviewer Alys Hurn is editorial assistant at Gardens Illustrated.

This well thought-out book is all about growing the vegetables, fruit, flowers and herbs that you can bake with. Holly Farrell writes in a down-to-earth way, expressing the simple joy that can be found from growing your own produce and baking at home.

There are 50 recipes in total divided into five sections: Spring and Summer; Autumn and Winter; Afternoon Tea; Pudding; and Savoury Bakes, all illustrated with Jason Ingram's charming photographs. Each recipe is paired with a page of growing information on the crops needed to bake them. The 'grow' pages provide basic instructions on planting, maintenance and harvest for each crop and offer advice on the best cultivars to grow for a successful bake.

Refreshingly, all the recipes use regular baking ingredients found in most kitchen cupboards. My last-minute decision to bake a tray of beetroot brownies, avoided the usual mad dash to the shops, and a plate of squidgy squares were whipped up in no time.

I loved the great selection of unexpected recipes, such as tomato cupcakes, and rhubarb custard and crumble cake and I had to try making the pea cheesecake. Expecting it to taste like a quiche, I was surprised to find that the consistency was just as creamy and decadent as the sweet version, although I thought the peas could be paired with more vegetables to give the cheesecake a bit more substance.

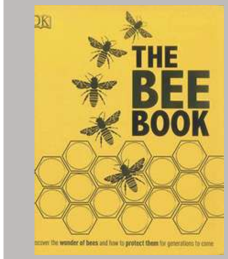
A large portion of the book is dedicated to two introductory chapters: In the Garden offers useful information and simple gardening guides for digging and preparing soil, to planting out and pruning crops; while In the Kitchen lists an A-Z of hints and tips to help you succeed in your bakes.

Although the advice is basic, it is a sound point of reference for beginners looking to grow a little more in their garden.

Book offer
RRP £16.99. **Reader offer price £14.99** including p&p*.

Other books

The best of the rest includes a beekeeper's bible, a grow-your-own guide and projects for creative kids.



THE BEE BOOK
by Fergus Chadwick et al.
DK, £16.99
ISBN 978-0241217429
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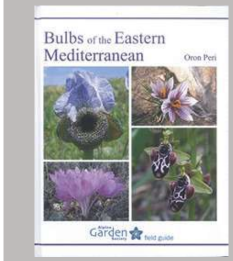

BULBS OF THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN
by Oron Peri
Alpine Garden Society, £38
ISBN 978-0900048975
A photographic field guide to more than 400 species of Mediterranean bulbs.

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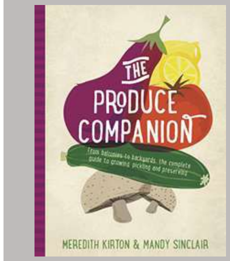

THE PRODUCE COMPANION
Meredith Kirton and Mandy Sinclair
Hardie Grant, £20
ISBN 978-1742709192
A book of two halves: cultivation advice for growing at home; and more than 100 recipes to make use of your harvests.

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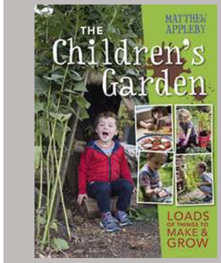

THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN
by Matthew Appleby
Frances Lincoln, £14.99
ISBN 978-0711236332
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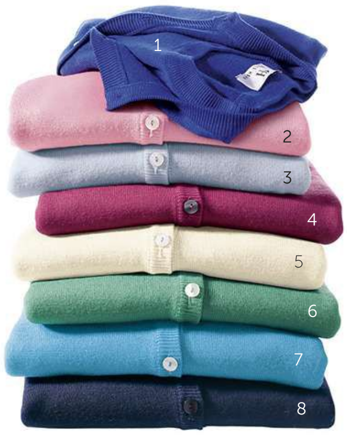

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Primula bulleyana
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FLOWERPHOTOS / ALAMY

***Primula japonica* 'Miller's Crimson' offer price £3.06**
Candelabra primula requiring moist soil. Large rosettes of foliage and thick stems with whorls of crimson flowers. May and June, 40cm.

JAN SMITH / GAP PHOTOS

Primula pulverulenta
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ACROSS
1 Type of maple in terrace rockery (4)
4 Describes an ericaceous plant not taking kindly to eg a linden? (4-5)
9 Develop into mature plant (possibly wrong to include oxygen) (4,2)
10 Root vegetable spoilt by clear ice (8)
11 Cultivated grassy area's – rule before noon! (4)
12 Small water features removing top of seed furrows (5)
13 Woody plant, right from scrubland (4)
14 Nematodes, sadly, enveloping this early fruiting tomato (6)
16 They're a sub-genus of rhododendrons (7)
18 Fruitful – for I clip madly! (8)
21 Compact, white-flowering hebe – a gem? (6)
22 See 25 down
24 Eye-watering bulb? (5)
25 A pulse – a poor person doesn't have one (4)
26 Brian Mathew MBE/RHS medal winner is one – possibly obtains tip of plant (8)
28 Flowers, say, left in bloomers? (6)
29 Medicinal herb, genus *Teucrium*, gardener re-arranged around start of May (9)
30 Hank produces a large-flowering, magenta geranium (4)

DOWN
2 Umbelliferous pungent herb carried on twisting (9)
3 Argument over one mountain ash (5)
4 Toadflax genus, snapdragon relative (7)
5 Threadlike filaments of fungi affected May lice (7)
6 Sheila moved a 'Snowdrop' tree genus (7)
7 Bituminous content of nectarine (3)
8 Wields a scythe (spare's out of order) (5)
13 Reportedly flogs red root vegetables? (5)
15 Fissure eg in root vegetable from irregular watering (5)
17 Genus of trees with camellia-like flowers – after a bit of sun, I water it roughly (9)
19 Southern US state's yellow *Aquilegia* (7)
20 Got eg seed potatoes to sprout (7)
21 Evergreen conifer possibly unripe after start of June (7)
23 Awful smell right inside fork's tine! (5)
25/22 Disease of roses etc on a dangerous stretch of road? (5,4)
27 An essential element for plant growth in bonsai roots (3)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

MARCH'S SOLUTION

ACROSS 1 Blight **5** Legumes **9** Sparkler **10** Galega **11** Anne **12** Aloes **13** Okra **14** Chatto **17** EH Wilson **19** Brambles **22** Thrift **24** Vein **25** Banks **27** Sap **29** Barrow **30** Earths up **31** Liatris **32** Bo-Peep.

DOWN 2 Lupin **3** Garrett **4** Tilia **5** Liriope **6** Gages **7** Milfoil **8** Sugarloaf **15** Horsetail **16** Oil **18** Wet **20** Monarda **21** Sunless **23** Rosehip **25** Bower **26** Shrub **28** Prune.

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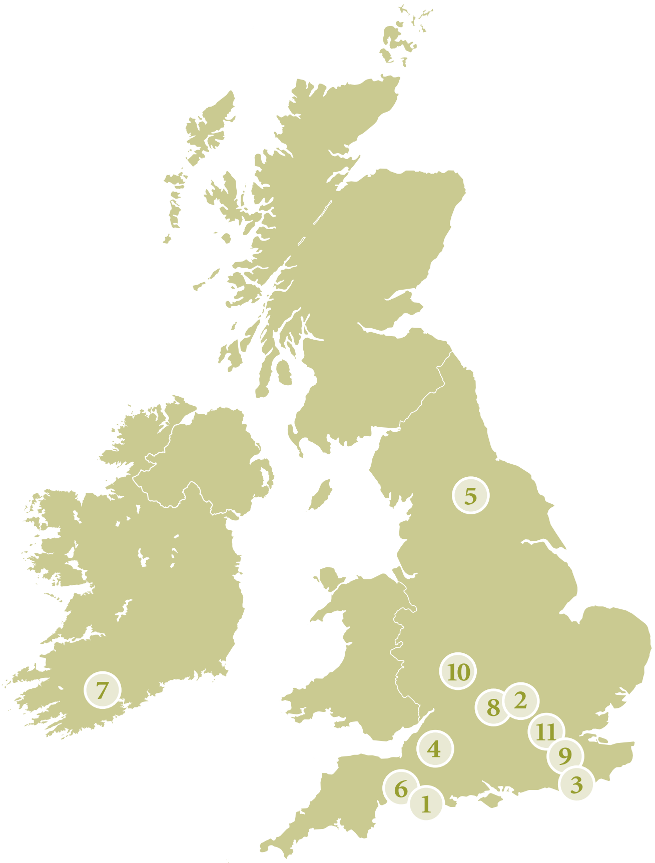

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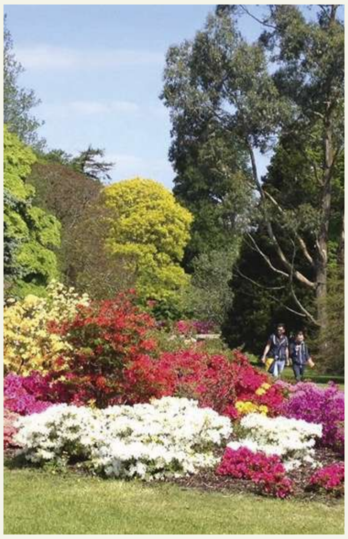

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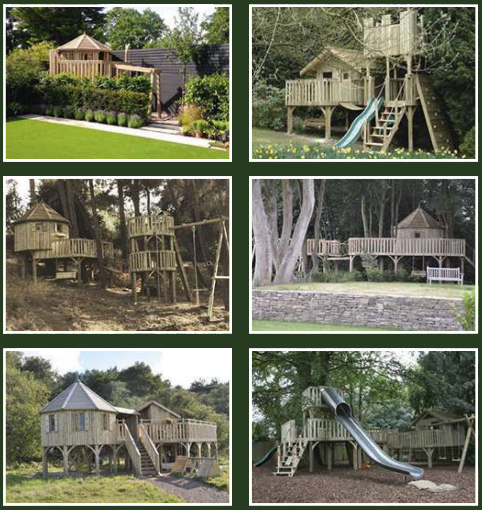

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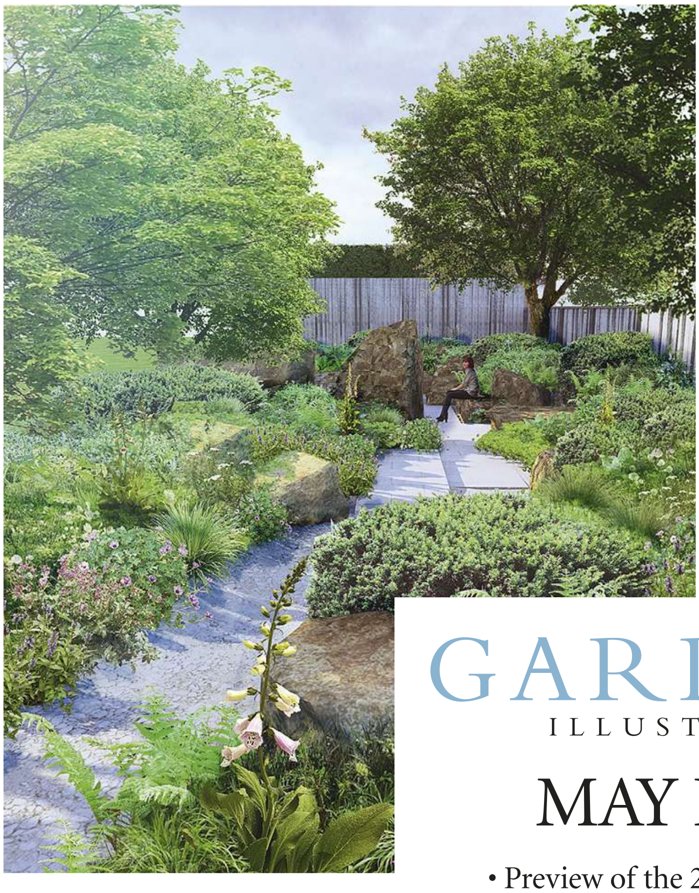

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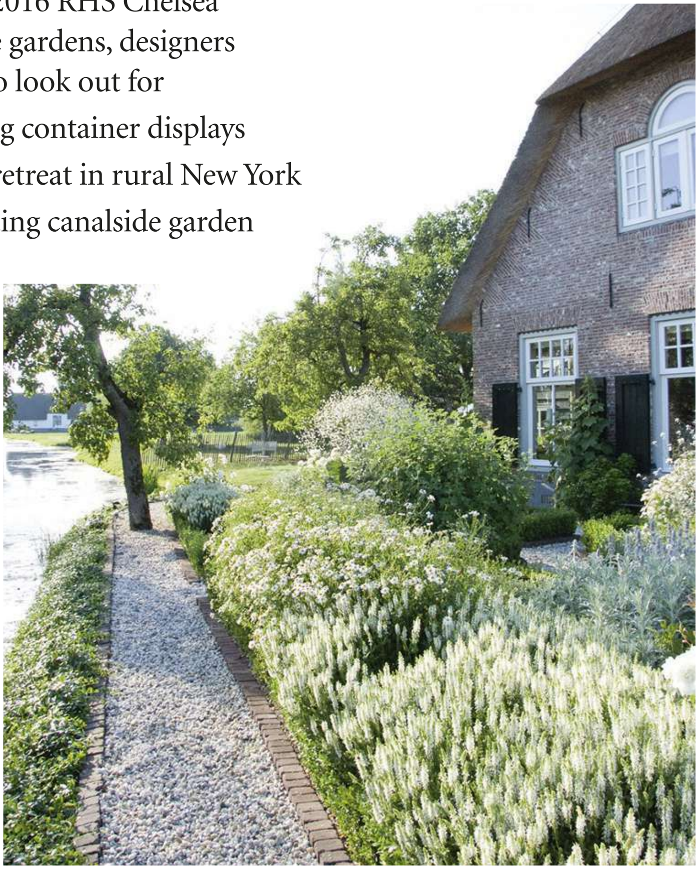

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Colour blind

Back in rain-soaked England, Frank starts to see its predominant colour in a new green light

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**

A bluebell needs the shimmering green of the woodland floor for its magic

Green, more than any other colour, is either overlooked or overdone. I, as much as anyone, have been guilty of the former error, but now, every time the plane breaks the clouds over Birmingham, I see what I had been blind to while it was in front of my eyes. It used to happen before, when I first began to spend time in England, and would go home to Ireland to be dazzled by the comparative green. It was my mother's opinion that green was God's favourite colour and so something they had in common. She had never been anywhere that wasn't green, so you could forgive her for thinking it. And now also I commend her for noticing.

We plant people are always looking for ways out of green: for black and purple and glaucous and variegated foliage to relieve the tedium. We eschew the flat green of lawns for the tapestry of meadows. We can give the colour a grudging acknowledgement as a good background if it is the flat and dark of a yew hedge, but we long for brick walls to ripen the stems of our tender rarities. Green only becomes interesting if it breaks the rules and applies itself to a flower.

In Ireland they used to talk about forty shades of green. Perhaps that is as many as you can hold in your mind at one time. But now in April, and an English April at that, it seems as though forty shades are added to the picture every morning, if you can tear yourself away from the floral novelties for a moment to see it. As each thing comes to leaf, the colour of the leaves progress from day to day; all the chlorophyll adjusting itself in readiness for the perfection of May, but passing in the meantime through infinite harmonies.

If you pick bluebells and put them in a vase they are nothing. A bluebell needs the shimmering green of the woodland floor for its magic. Not only the self-provided foil of its own foliage, but the anaemic translucence of the infant leaves above, and the dull softness of moss on fallen trees, and the coarse punctuation of dog's mercury, or whatever local has chosen to elbow its way in. These are the greens that rob the bluebell of a normal-making purple hue and allow it the illusion of purity and blueness.

And so to the overdone. There is no such thing as a white or blue or hot garden, in reality. Each is forced to accept green in some degree, and the least degree is almost certainly that there will be more green than the theoretical dominant colour. But we have learned not to see green (poor God). Further towards the other end of the scale of gardening, from me, there is a school where only green is allowed. Lawn, topiary, well-behaved unflowering shrub, all obeying geometry. It is considered, by its adherents, to be the pinnacle of horticultural taste.

That is pretentious claptrap. I can't believe that anyone who claims to be an admirer of Russell Page has actually read his book, and if they have and continue with their admiration they can only be as great a snob as he was. The flowerless, all green garden looks good in photographs, but that is because it is a kind of monochrome: the nearest you can take nature to black and white. And you only have to look at photographs for a moment. To live with such a scheme every day you would have to be the sort of vain and rich person that a garden designer can spot a mile off.

Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

If you can avoid errors of overlooking and overdoing, and know that green is the colour of oxygen being made, and know that oxygen is the element that creates and destroys us, which makes it something of a god in itself, then green becomes a wonder on which wonders depend. A wonder it is hard to live without. □

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